GALLERY

OF

PORTRAITS.

BRITISH MUSEUM

GALLERY

OF

PORTRAITS

Riquetti / Lg. H J K

OF THE

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN BY

COUNT DE MIRABEAU.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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GALLERY

OF

PORTRAITS

PREFACE

BY THE

TRANSLATOR.

IT is peculiar to certain periods of the world, to furniſh the moſt ample ſtock of materials for the compoſition of hiſtory. This has neceſſarily occurred, when literature was in its higheſt ſtate of improvement, and men ſeemed to have arrived at all the politeneſs and refinement that civilization can beſtow. The remark has frequently been applied to the age of Cicero. During that period, it was cuſtomary with the greateſt characters in the ſtate, to compoſe memoirs of their own tranſactions, and, in addition to this channel for the preſervation of

facts,

facts, we have a large collection of the epiſtolary correſpondence of Cicero, and others. If the commentaries of their leaders have periſhed, it is from hence however, and from certain other original ſources, that Suetonius and Dion have drawn their ample ſtock of information. Thus we are acquainted in the moſt intimate manner with the characters, the virtues and defects of Cicero and Cato, of Pompey and Cæſar, of Lucullus and Marcellus, of Caſſius and Brutus; and it has been ſaid ſomewhat hyperbolically, that, of ſome of theſe perſonages, we might even make an accurate journal of ſeveral years of their lives.

It happened, in the inſtance to which we allude, that no period of hiſtory was ever more deeply intereſting, or more ineſtimably important, whether we conſider the qualifications of the men, or the admirable nature of the ſtruggle for expiring liberty. A period of another ſort, not leſs unique and extraordinary, ſeems likely to occur in the preſent ſituation of our Gallic neighbours. Liberty, acquired in the face of a ſtanding army; acquired, as it were, in the natural courſe of things, and without a ſtruggle; acquired by the ſingle influence of gradual illumination and truth, upon the minds of mankind; acquired by the unarmed inhabitants of a luxurious and peaceful metropolis, is an event altogether unexampled in the hiſtory of the world. The virtue, the unanimity the perſeverance, of this gallant people; the rank they have already held, as the dictators of elegant manners and elegant literature to mankind;

kind; their ſituation, which naturally renders them the centre and ſoul, as it were, of the European powers, all command and obtain our deepeſt attention. It is therefore fortunate, that, in this inſtance, the publicity of their debates, and the multitude of intereſting publications, which are daily proceeding from their preſs, ſeem likely to furniſh a maſs of hiſtorical materials that has never been exceeded.

The publication before us is altogether unparalleled in the age of Cicero, and is certainly not leſs worthy our attention, than the moſt admired productions of that period. The moſt conſiderable character which the revolution of France has yet exhibited, has thought proper to ſit down to delineate the character of himſelf and his contemporaries; and he has certainly aimed at impartiality; with what ſucceſs, we dare not, at this diſtance from the ſcene of action, take upon us to pronounce.

The character of the count de Mirabeau has greatly riſen upon the world during the ſittings of the national aſſembly. Partially known to the inhabitants of Europe, he encountered conſiderable diſadvantages. Poverty was not among the leaſt of theſe; and to a poor nobleman we are apt too generally to affix the ideas of ſervility, pliableneſs, and the ſpirit of an adventurer. The ſtyle of his productions is extremely unequal; and is often in no common degree involved and obſcure. His firſt publications, though not deſtitute of merit, were unworthy of the greatneſs of his

mind, and were ſuppoſed to clothe common ideas in pompous and ſounding language. Their author was alſo frequently liable to the charge of glaring inconſiſtency. He penetrated into the ſecrets of the Pruſſian court, and recommended himſelf to prince Henry and others under the guiſe of friendſhip, and immediately after thought proper to publiſh their weakneſſes to the world. He profeſſed, in the ſtrongeſt phraſes that language could furniſh, his admiration and attachment to the character of Mr. de Calonne; and then made a virulent and unqualified attack upon him from the preſs, which had its ſhare in contributing to his fall. The count de Mirabeau endeavours to explain this feature in the preſent publication, from his extreme and unbounded love of truth; and, if we attend to his remarks upon the ſubject, we ſhall acknowledge the ſolution to be plauſible, if not ſatisfactory.

But it was for the active ſcene of a popular aſſembly, that the genius of Mirabeau was particularly formed. Here the abilities of men are brought to an irreſiſtible teſt, and he, who can depart from ſuch a trial with additional honour, muſt be acknowledged to poſſeſs no mean claims to our applauſe. In this ſcene, our author has gradually riſen higher in the public eſtimation, and one by one has vanquiſhed and outſtripped his contemporaries and rivals. It might perhaps have been expected, that France ſhould have produced in ſuch a criſis a phalanx of geniuſes of the firſt order; but the fact is, that Mirabeau occupies a region,

to

to which no other member of the ſtates-general has aſcended. If we ſhould think proper to amuſe ourſelves, with contraſting his qualifications with thoſe of the parliamentary leaders in our own country, and, if we ſhould judge him, in any reſpect their inferior, we are bound, at leaſt, to recollect, that he excels in that application of philoſophy, and general principles to the ſcience of politics, which ſeems abſolutely unknown within the walls of the Britiſh parliament. In ſaying this, we allude to his principles upon trade, taxation, and ſeveral other of the moſt conſiderable objects of political ſcience.

But, if the members of the preſent national aſſembly be not, in all reſpects, the conſummate characters we could have deſired, it muſt at leaſt be acknowledged, that there is a quantity of ability diffuſed among them, that will ſeldom be diſcovered in any parallel inſtance. Our author has undertaken to delineate thirty-one perſonages; and, in this liſt, though he has certainly exerted a ſufficient degree of ſeverity, it will eaſily be ſeen, that there are not more than ſix that can be ſuppoſed to be altogether deſtitute of ability *; though it muſt be granted, that the abilities of ſome of them do not ſeem altogether fitted for the ſcene in which they are to act. It is alſo to be conſidered, that, from accident or other cauſes, ſome of the moſt accompliſhed characters in the

* The archbiſhop of Paris, the duke of Liancourt, the prince de Poix, and meſſieurs Barentin, Montmorin, and Fayette.

French

French nation, among whom we would mention the marquis de Condorcet, and abbé Raynal, are not in the liſt of the national aſſembly.

We have only to add, that the notes of the author are printed at the end of the volume; and that, if any errors be diſcovered in the hiſtorical references at the bottom of the page, they are imputable to the tranſlator. The tranſlator has alſo taken the liberty of arranging the characters in an order, different from that of the original; the reaſons of which will be obvious to any one, who ſhall take the trouble to conſult it.

INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

IF this work ſhould be confounded with the ſatirical productions of the preſs, the reader will be led into a groſs error. It is the intention of the writer, to aſſiſt in illuminating the national confidence; to point out to her the perſons upon whoſe exertions ſhe may fearleſs repoſe herſelf, and the perſons who, if too deeply truſted, may lead her into misfortune. It will be idle to pretend, that influence and intrigue had not their ſhare in the late elections. The delegates of the general-will have all of them nearly the ſame powers, but do not all poſſeſs the ſame ability, the ſame degree of thoſe qualities, upon which their conſtituents ſhould place reliance, nor perhaps the ſame intereſt in giving effect to the general will. Of how much

much importance therefore ought it to be ſuppoſed, that we ſhould be fully acquainted with the merits of thoſe, to whom we have confided our deſtiny? If they be ſincere lovers of their country, they will rejoice in the diffuſion of this knowledge, and will ſay, with the celebrated Athenian, "I am delighted to "find that my ſtate has to boaſt of ſo "many abler citizens than myſelf!" If their feelings be of another ſort, what forbearance do we owe them? Indeed, upon every ſuppoſition, is it to ſo weak conſiderations, that we can be expected to ſacrifice for a moment the welfare of the ſtate?

We deem it of ſome conſequence to mention here an idea, which, indeed, is not new, but the application of which is not made ſo often as its utility would require. For the object we have in view, it is enough to conſider men under the two heads, of the talents and the diſpoſitions, neceſſary in the preſent memorable tranſaction. A ſound underſtanding, an unqueſtionable fortitude, the pure love of ones's country, the knowledge of her true intereſts, a native eloquence, an immutable adherence to true principles—

theſe

theſe are the things we require in a deputy, whatever order of the ſtate he may be called to repreſent; but for the reſt, to take notice, that Kaunitz has certain ſingular peculiarities; that Mr. Charles Fox loves buſineſs leſs than he loves pleaſure; that prince Potemkin never adopts his plan for preſent affairs, without thinking how it may influence the permanency of his power; all this will be totally ſuperfluous, provided thoſe perſonages, in ſpite of their blemiſhes, appear to ſerve their country with honour and ſucceſs. In the preſent caſe therefore we abjure all application, every ſort of perſonality, ſecure that we have ſaid enough for the information of the enlightened reader, and that it is ſuperfluous to ſpeak to the reſt.

People may cry out as much as they will againſt the multiplicity of pamphlets, and the licentiouſneſs of the preſs; it is to our free preſs, that we are indebted for the happineſs of beginning to be men; it is in the peruſal of certain works, that my countrymen have ſaid to themſelves, "There is then a portion of true penetration and of honeſt philanthropy among us; and accordingly the flame has been encouraged

encouraged and extended. At preſent, if a man be willing to aſſert certain truths, and to publiſh his diſcoveries to the world, he may be almoſt mathematically certain of having his ideas protected and vindicated, by the great body of the virtuous and the wiſe. Accordingly, our courage is revived; our energy is redoubled; we ſhake off the reſtraint of prejudice; we deliver ourſelves from the yoke of miniſterial deſpotiſm, which was accuſtomed equally to conſign to the horrors of the dungeon the man who aſſerted the great principles of truth, and the man who abuſed the art of printing for the diſſemination of calumny; and we eſtabliſh the irreſiſtible empire of mind upon everlaſting and unalterable foundations.

It is without doubt impoſſible to pronounce what will be the reſult of the ſtates-general; but whatever they do, and ſhould they be diſſolved to-morrow, the revolution is made. Let no miniſter hereafter hope to draw over his operations the veil of myſtery, to borrow money by addreſs and indirection, or to impoſe taxes without the people's perceiving it. Every miniſterial meaſure will be analyſed, will be conſecrated or rejected by the general

general opinion, previouſly to its accompliſhment. Henceforth the buſineſs will be to govern men, who are not ignorant of the neceſſity of ſubordination, but who are ſtill more completely ſatisfied, that the office of authority is, to execute the laws, and not to utter arbitrary mandates, flowing from a weak and unenlightened underſtanding.

The frequent meetings of the national aſſembly, will teach us to know who they are, that are capable of rendering uſeful ſervice. The choice of a miniſter will no longer be announced from the receſſes of a ſeraglio; men who hold the firſt offices of government, will no longer devolve their truſt upon others; they will, at leaſt bring with them to the council of the ſovereign ſome previous qualifications; nor ſhall we behold perſons totally unknown, introduced by a ſort of magic into the legiſlative aſſembly, juſt as at the opera, we ſee all on a ſudden a god arrive in his car, to annihilate at once the embarraſſments of the fable.

This Gallery will ſucceſſively preſent the Portraits of the men who may diſtinguiſh themſelves upon the public theatre, and will ſerve the purpoſe of a clue to

him,

him, who would trace the labyrinth of our tranſactions. The clue is almoſt always to be found, in the character of thoſe whom intrigue has thruſt into the vortex of affairs, or whom the executive power entruſts with the exerciſe of its functions.

If certain Letters, addreſſed ten years ago to the late Biſhop of Autun, had been attentively read, Mr. de Brienne would never have been called to the helm of affairs; and his wretched and abſurd adminiſtration would never have rendered neceſſary a proceeding, eſſential indeed to our welfare, but brought on too early, and accompanied with too little preparation and precaution.

Kings, chiefs, preſiding heads of ſublunary governments! believe at length this unqueſtionable maxim, That truth will never reach the throne, if it be not conveyed on the wings of liberty! Whatever may be alledged againſt this principle; however real may be the abuſes to which it is expoſed; whatever ſpecious reaſonings may be directed againſt its reality, truſt them not, and leave the communications of men as free as their thoughts. The calumniator is ſufficiently

puniſhed

puniſhed in the abhorrence of mankind, without the laws deigning to fix a ſtigma upon him; and the impotent efforts that are often employed for that purpoſe, ſerve only to give a momentary popularity to works, which would otherwiſe have periſhed in the obſcurity that engendered them.

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GALLERY

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FRANCUS.

(De Pompignan, Archbiſhop of Vienne.)

THIS reſpectable citizen ſerves his country as he has ſerved his God. He terminates his long career with ſtill more honour than he commenced it. The extreme of zeal verges upon fanaticiſm; but, in this brilliant and tempeſtuous period, Francus has diſplayed the moderation of a ſtateſman, and the patriotic warmth of an enlightened citizen.

Science is a magazine, to which we have recourſe in neceſſity. It rarely happens, that a man has not, in the courſe of his life, occaſion to employ this precious fund; and without it he can

ſeldom riſe to extraordinary excellence. Wit enables a man to dazzle; natural eloquence inſures his perſonal ſucceſs; but it is only by connected views, and the judicious uſe of experience, that a durable revolution can be effected in human opinions.

That which ought to give new luſtre to the character of Francus, is, that he has always eagerly defended the ſacred principles of religion, and cared comparatively little about the ambitious prerogatives of his order; that he has been much of a clergyman, and little of a prelate.

Blameleſs manners, tried diſintereſtedneſs, unaffected modeſty, the contempt of all ambitious weakneſs, the conſtant ſhare that the poor have enjoyed in his revenues, are powerful recommendations to the ſevere ſcrutiny of poſterity. Such have been the claims of Francus for a period of forty years. Sarcaſm and raillery have long purſued him; but even they have reſpected his morality and the ſobriety of his conduct. It is not, that during a critical period* he filled the chair of the national aſſembly; it is the firm and prudent conduct, that he obſerved in the province of Dauphinè in the midſt of diſturbance and confuſion, that has entitled him to our eulogium. In Bretagne, in Provence, in Franche Comté, government was accuſtomed to commotion; in the province where Francus reſided, it was unexampled, and men were not in general prepared to encounter it.

* From the 2 to the 18 July.

Francus has transferred to his country the primitive zeal that animated him for his flock, and has thus gained to himſelf the ſuffrages of men, by whom his character had till then been miſtaken. The clergy are now compelled to abdicate their claims. In vain they endeavour to encounter the force of reaſon with their antiquated titles; they feel that the moment of order is arrived, and they are contented to appear to yield to their country, what in reality they yield to the irreſiſtible dictates of neceſſity.

We will not undertake to pronounce upon the abilities of Francus, though we have ſufficient reaſon to found a prepoſſeſſion in their favour. But we aſſert, without fear of contradiction, the purity of his morals. This merit is now become ſo rare among the clergy, that it is not poſſible to exceed in the tribute of our applauſe. It would even ſeem, that thoſe prelates, who by the nature of their ſees are called to political power, affect an indifference to profeſſional decorum, which affords a preſumption, rather of the depravity of their hearts, than of the force of their underſtanding.

At this time of day a man is inexcuſable, who does not feel the force of general political principles. Theſe principles are ſo few, ſo ſimple, ſo evident; they have been developed ſo often and in ſo many different ways; that you have only to follow the ſtandard of a certain number of enlightened and ſuperior minds, to be ſure of not going wrong. This is the mode that Francus has adopted; and the applauſe of mankind will attend upon his progreſs, if indeed the applauſe of mankind be in any degree the object of his purſuit.

JUNIUS.

(De Juigné, Archbiſhop of Paris.)

What language, Mathan, for a prieſt of heaven *?

THERE is a ſort of men, who can never wander one ſtep from the beaten path with impunity. When heaven denies us a certain degree of ability, eternal ſilence is our prudence and our duty. What an unlucky wretch was Junius, to have broken this ſilence in the midſt of the late elections? What angel of darkneſs induced him to light up the torch of diſcord?

Junius is one of thoſe wiſe and honourable men, of whom with much ado you may make an archbiſhop; and one of thoſe common-place archbiſhops, who make the worſt ſtateſmen in the world. Kings are ſtrangely unkind to perſons of a certain ſtamp, when they confer upon them diſtinguiſhed ſtations; and fate is ſtill more unkind, when ſhe draws them out of theſe ſtations to diſplay talents that they do not poſſeſs.

Chriſtopher de Beaumont †, upright and pertinacious, benevolent and perſecuting, of little learning, but chuſing his co-operators with a certain felicity of diſcernment, deſerved and acquired the love of his dioceſans. He was unalterable in his principles; he was furious and inexorable in his zeal; but he ſhut up that zeal within the limits that his office preſcribed him.

Junius, on the other hand, had acquired no

* Eh! quoi, Mathan, d' un prêtre eſt-ce là le langage?
RACINE.

† Predeceſſor to the preſent archbiſhop of Paris.

fame,

fame, had excited no envy, had afforded no food for the tooth of calumny; and yet all at once he ſees himſelf the devoted object of popular execration. Why is this? It is, that, as a prelate, men reckoned him for nothing, and he was forgiven; but they could not excuſe him for quitting this nothingneſs, to paſs at once into all the violence of feudal fanaticiſm.

A prudent intention led him to canvas for a ſeat in the national aſſembly. It was without doubt the beſt method he could adopt, to repair the errors he had committed, and to draw a veil over that fatal election of ſuch a multiplicity of powers, he had thrown a ſort of deriſion upon an auguſt choice, in which perfect liberty ought to have been the moſt eſſential ingredient.

As to the imprudent ſtep he took with reſpect to the king, his motive excuſes him. But the object purſued, and the circumſtances attending it, rendered it extremely mal a-propos, and the people went near to puniſh it with too much ſeverity. The ſudden change of conduct that followed it, ſhewed it in a light ſtill more unfavourable. The only concluſion we draw from this ſeries of contradictions, is, to reflect on the cruel neceſſity under which a man labours, (when he is unable to give to his conduct a conſiſtent and judicious form) of yielding to every tranſient impulſe, and being governed by whim, faſhion and caprice.

GUEL-

GUELBOSIN.

(De Boiſgelin, Archbiſhop of Aix, and one of the Forty Members of the French Academy.)

THE moſt amiable manners and gentleſt diſpoſitions characteriſe Guelboſin. He fears the tempeſtuouſneſs of a revolution; all his vows are in favour of peace. France in its preſent form, is in his opinion *the beſt of all poſſible* kingdoms. Can a man complain of a government, that gives him rank and eſtimation, and a revenue of 300,000 livres*? What can be ſubſtituted in the room of a policy, ſo regular and beautiful, where *whatever is, is right?* He lives in Paris ſurrounded with the graces of luxury and the charms of friendſhip; he quits it for a moment, and his ſenſes are regaled with the homage and proſtration of a province; he returns loaded with affairs, which reduce him to the agreeable neceſſity of playing a part in drawing-rooms and the cloſet. Who would riſk ſo delightful a ſituation to plunge into the horrors of a civil war? No, no; the uſe of ſuperior talents is to enable their poſſeſſor, to fix the roots of his felicity in the deepeſt ſoil, and to ſpread out its branches in every direction.

The ambition of Guelboſin is tranquil, but indefatigable. He fixes one object in his mind, and determines to obtain that. Another man would ſurmount in a day the interval between; Guelboſin advances every day a ſtep. This ſlow and prudent proceeding excites no active jealouſy in his rivals, and does not irritate

* £.12,500. ſterling.

them

them to oppoſe his advancement. You will ſay perhaps, Muſt not ambition be ſatisfied, when it has reached the object it propoſed to itſelf? No: we ſoon grow familiar with the place we occupy; we glance an obſerving eye upon our merit; we muſter in our imagination the good deeds we have performed, and above all we conjure up thoſe that we ſhall perform. We repeat to ourſelves, that reputation is the flame upon the altar: ceaſe to feed it, and it expires. Yielding to the influence of theſe various motives, we endeavour to add new luſtre to our career, and place no other bound to our hopes of advancement, than that which is preſcribed by the nature of things, or the inſtitutions of our country.

Guelboſin is a principal member of that celebrated order, which conſtitutes among us a nation within a nation, which has one alternative conſtantly in view; they muſt either act upon intereſts ſeparate from the general intereſts, or they muſt ceaſe to exiſt. Though his natural talents be of no common magnitude, the conſtant adoption of an error has converted itſelf in his mind into certainty, and he honeſtly believes, that the actual conſtitution of the clergy is wiſe, political, and eſſential to the ſupport of a monarchy. With an amiable and moderate character and a lucid elocution, he has ſupported this opinion with more ſucceſs, than could ever have ſprung from the vehemence of enthuſiaſtic energy, or the ſuperciliouſneſs of dictatorial pride.

The moſt unaccountable thing is, how Guelboſin has prevailed upon himſelf to become the partiſan of a man, for whom he can not only entertain

entertain no eſteem, but whom he can no longer conſider as in any way reſpectable. It is, that, to retract our firſt declaration, is to acknowledge ourſelves fallible, and ſeems, when a man is deſirous of filling a certain character, to be putting arms into the hands of our adverſary. Were it not for this apprehenſion, Guelboſin would abjure a connexion, that ſince the maſk has been torn away from the hypocrite whoſe impoſtures had ſo long been ſucceſsful, will tarniſh the glory of every man that adheres to it.

Guelboſin will not be a mere negative quantity in the national aſſembly. He will ſuggeſt uſeful hints, but he will not defend them with courage. In the different committees he will clear up what is doubtful, but he will never open a new career of policy. He will never ſell himſelf to the court, but he will never endeavour to reconcile her intereſts and the intereſts of the people, and will be idle enough to imagine he undertakes a poſſibility. He will propoſe pecuniary ſacrifices of a temporary nature, but he will not renounce for ever, privileges, uſurped upon the public, and incompatible with ſocial order. He will diſplay the virtues of an honeſt man, but not the character of a citizen ready to die for his country.

The province, of which he has the adminiſtration, gives teſtimony to the generoſity of his procedures, and the purity of his intentions. He declined to exchange it for a better, and probably will not quit it, but for the office of miniſter; if the office of miniſter ſhall ever hereafter be what we have ſeen it, a conſiderable branch lopped away from the ſovereign power.

Without

Without wandering into the boundleſs field of political conjecture, we may however venture to predict, that the reſponſibility of office will prove a check to the ambitious, and that men, deſirous of graſping at dignity and influence, will recollect with no complacent feelings, that they are to be watched over by twelve hundred deputies of the people of France.

Add to this, that men of a mild and peaceable diſpoſition, ſooner give way to the love of repoſe, than thoſe ſouls of fire, that are turbulent and ungovernable even upon the brink of the tomb.

AMOENUS.

(Perigord, Biſhop of Autun.)

AMOENUS has thoſe attractive externals, which give an embelliſhment to virtue. The firſt inſtrument of his ſucceſs has been an excellent underſtanding. Criticiſing men with indulgence, and judging of events with ſobriety, he has found the golden mean, which conſtitutes the character of a genuine ſage. There is a certain degree of perfection, that exiſts only in the imagination; and there is a ſort of ſublimity in deſiring to realiſe it. But theſe brilliant efforts produce only a temporary approbation; no benefit follows upon their exertion, and the very men, who applauded, learn to deſpiſe them. A ſound underſtanding deſpiſes every thing gaudy and glittering; acquainted with the limits of human capacity, it does not indulge to the viſionary hope, of extending them beyond the bounds, that experience has preſcribed and nature has dictated.

Amoenus does not conſider a ſolid reputation as the work of a day. Such an ephemeron, growing at once to a prodigious ſize, from the moment it has attained its untimely maturity, decays, and falls away, and involves in its fall the fortune and tranquility of its poſſeſſor. Amoenus will ſucceed in all his deſigns, becauſe he will watch the moments that fortune infallibly offers, and not endeavour to impoſe violence upon her. Every ſtep of his advance-

advancement will be accompanied with the diſplay of a new talent; and proceeding from ſucceſs to ſucceſs, he will unite in his favour that body of ſuffrages, which point a man out, as the perſon, that muſt neceſſarily be called to fill the great ſituations that may become vacant.

Envy, which rarely admits the exiſtence of an untarniſhed excellence, has replied to theſe eulogies, that Amoenus wants that energy of character, which burſts through the reſtraint of obſtacles, and without which a man cannot render eſſential public ſervice. I aſk, in the firſt place, whether we do not deceive ourſelves by the words *character and individuality*, and whether this energy that excites our admiration, in reality does much for the happineſs of the world? Suppoſing that, in certain critical moments, it has triumphed over intrepidity and reſolution; is that always deſirable? But I ſtop myſelf. Some readers will perhaps imagine, that I confound conſtancy, ſtability and the tenaciouſneſs of virtue, with violence, enthuſiaſm and rage. Amoenus gives way to circumſtances and prudential conſiderations; and thinks himſelf at liberty to offer ſome ſacrifices to peace, without violating the principles that are the baſis of his morality and his conduct.

He has the advantage of an engaging character, a prepoſſeſſing figure, and amiable manners. So many recommendations are calculated to ſhock and to mortify. What can be more intolerable, than a man, who takes it in his head to unite them with the uſeful chance of an honourable birth, and the eſſential qualities of an elevated ſoul? of conſequence we conſole ourſelves by hunting after defects. We find a weakneſs

weakneſs or a peculiarity, and upon an emergency can metamorphoſe this into ſomething of greater importance.

What are we to expect from Amoenus in the ſtates general? Nothing, or as good as nothing, if he conform to the imaginary intereſts of his order; ſomething great and illuſtrious, if he act from himſelf, if he penetrate his ſoul with this great truth, that in the national aſſembly every member is a citizen. He, who drew up certain Articles of Inſtructions, has the vigour neceſſary to give a deciſive weight to his opinion and advice.

It has been charged upon Amoenus as a defect, that he has maintained his adherence to a miniſter in diſgrace * He never ſhut his eyes upon failings, which on the contrary he more than once took the opportunity to correct; and he did juſtice to talents, the loſs of which he ſo much the more deeply regretted, as he was more perfectly acquainted with their energy and extent. It is the incident of every day, that we diſcover the defects of our friends; we lament them; we counteract them; and when events precipitate their poſſeſſors from the throne of favour, we conſole them, we defend them, and we endeavour to create for them an occaſion of reaſſerting that reputation, which for a moment had been tarniſhed.

Amoenus underſtands mankind too well to be the dupe of commendation. If he ſmile upon the illuſions of friendſhip, he repulſes with diſguſt the miſrepreſentations of flattery.

* M. de Calonne, ex-controller general of the finances, now reſident in England.

But

But this is not the only road that impoſture has diſcovered for itſelf; and, if Amoenus effected the detection a little too late, he will however never forget the leſſon of uſeful experience.

SCYROS.

(Abbé Sieyes.)

IT is not ſurpriſing that a man, whoſe faculties have been preſerved unworn, and who for thirty years has enriched his mind by uſeful ſtudy and philoſophical converſation, who apprehends a ſubject ſtrongly, conſiders it, fathoms it, views it on all ſides, and then brings it out in all its ſtrength,—it is not ſurpriſing that ſuch a man ſhould have a mob of admirers. The novelty of the exhibition is ſtriking, and the exploſion of a talent, which, long, concealed, at length appears in all its ſplendour, arreſts attention and extorts applauſe.

Scyros, poſſeſſes every talent that is pleaſing to the bulk of readers. His ſtyle is nervous, his tone deciſive, his aſſertions bold, his thoughts new, his opinions accommodated to the reigning taſte. He takes advantage of the curioſity his ſubject excited; and he convinces readers, that were already deſirous to be convinced. Full of admiration, it would be barbarous and unjuſt to arraign our firſt judgment; to examine, whether the ſtyle, that was ſo nervous, was equally clear; whether the tone, that was ſo deciſive, kept pace with reaſon and truth; whether the aſſertions flowed from an heated imagination, or were but branches growing out of a regular and connected ſyſtem; whether the thoughts had ſolidity as well as force; whether the opinions were the reſult of reflection and conviction, or were the ſecret impulſe

impulſe of a perſonal intereſt, which diſpoſes of our ſentiments when we ſcarcely ſuſpect it.

Scyros is inebriated with his firſt ſucceſs, and is perſuaded, that, when one is generally read, one is univerſally admired. Hence that profound eſteem for himſelf, that looks with contempt upon every rival; hence that deſpotical tyranny over the ſentiment of others, which forms ſo pleaſant a contraſt to the cauſe in which he is engaged; hence that arrogant aſſumption, which, it is true, ſometimes accompanies genuine ability, but which always cauſes mankind to repent of the eulogiums they beſtowed upon an intellectual deſpot.

Scyros has that auſterity of manners, which mature age requires in a profeſſion, that does not pardon ſo much as juvenile errors. He has that ruggedneſs of character, that ſprings from a ruſtic education; he has that haughtineſs, which ariſes from a new-acquired reputation. Nature, impartial in her diſtribution, has denied to Scyros the faculty of ſpeaking. His voice is thin, his geſture inſignificant, his expreſſion ſlow, his conception difficult, his method unintelligible; he is incapable of ardent and animated language, and he prefers correctneſs of form to energy of diction.

Very reſpectable judges have pronounced, that the principal merit of Scyros has been, to publiſh indigeſted truths, which, in the month of January 1789, reached the extremity of Gallic daring. Scyros pretends, that all the pamphlets, which have ſince appeared, contain nothing but his thoughts, drawn into wire, and made feeble and unergetic.

" Who ſhall decide when doctors diſagree * ?"

But I am half inclined to believe, or at leaſt I muſt be permitted to ſuſpect, that Scyros is a mere bubble, ſupported with popular opinion. After reading his declamations, one lends him genius, another force, a third eloquence and a fourth intellectual intrepidity. Every one talks of this ſubſtance, half real, half imaginary. In all revolutions men want to hang up their opinions ſomewhere, and the multitude, who muſt have a leader, have made choice of Scyros. They have then doubled their veneration, in order to juſtify their exaggerated praiſe.

Scyros had given his name to the famous motion, by which the repreſentatives of the people declared themſelves the National Aſſembly †. But in reality what ſhall we aſcribe to him of this motion, which was on all ſides reviſed, corrected, new caſt, diſfigured, ſoftened, regenerated? It is good however, to have theſe points of rendezvous, at which the greater number may rally, without even comprehending what they intend or what they perform.

I know not whether it be, that men are a ſtrange compound of heterogeneous materials; or whether, while we review them in this gallery, we examine them with too anatomical a ſcutiny; but theſe great men of half a year's ſtanding appear to us to fall extremely ſhort of their premature reputation. " Do we then " deny to Scyros a ſtrong underſtanding, a " reaſonable portion of ability, and deciſive " maxims and concluſions?" Certainly not:

* Non noſtrum inter vos tantas componere lites. VIRGIL.

† 17 June.

but

but, that we may not incur the guilt of deceiving poſterity, we hold ourſelves bound to add, that theſe brilliant adjuncts are not accompanied with that mental diſcretion, which is the firſt of all qualities in a true politician. Without it we play for kingdoms, doublets or nothing; we deſtroy, without knowing how to rebuild; and we forget, that, to change the deſtiny of twenty-four millions of men, it is neceſſary, that we ſhould have conſidered the ſubject with mature attention.

What has alarmed men of real diſcernment, is the ſpruce way, in which they have talked of making a conſtitution, and of giving a new movement to the political machine; as if it were an eaſy thing to harmonize the wiſhes of twelve hundred individuals; as if there were no doubt, that the provinces would aſſent to arrangements, a great number of which are in oppoſition to their inſtructions.

Scyros ſeems to underſtand neither his age nor his country. Nothing is more eaſy, than to point out abuſes, and to declaim againſt the uſurpation of an ariſtocracy. Nothing is more difficult, than to correct them, and ſo to diſtribute the powers of government, that the parts may balance each other. The people are deeply intereſted in the annihilation of deſpotiſm; but they are ſtill more intereſted to guard againſt anarchy. But how ſhall we conceal, that the unqualified principles of our demagogues lead to that termination? Read with attention the pamphlets of Scyros, and you will agree, that his zeal partakes of enthuſiaſm, that he is more hardy than eloquent, and that his talents are better calculated for the tumult of a revoluționiſt than for the regularity of a legiſlator.

UMA.

U M A.

(Abbé Maury, one of the Forty Members of the French Academy.)

IN an age ſufficiently relaxed in its morals, we have however this degree of equity, we do not pardon a man the irregularity of his conduct in conſideration of the greatneſs of his talents. Not a ſoul denies the oratorical powers of Uma, and not a ſoul applauds them. Loſt in the ignoble herd of ſlaves, he vegetates without glory, and has ceaſed to have an enemy. The well-known panegyriſt of the advantages of ſlavery, letters, philoſophy and France alike diſclaim him, he finds no aſylum but at the footſtool of deſpotiſm.

When Mr. Linguet took in hand the cauſe of deſpotiſm, men ſaw nothing in him but an ingenious declaimer, who found his account in ſupporting a paradox, and placed his glory in oppoſing principles that every body believed. We forgave this literary inſanity, we ſmiled at the ambition of a Levite, who ſtruggled as he could to build himſelf a reputation. But, to employ one's pen by a ſecret compact in favour of machinations againſt the public liberty, to prop the tottering projects of deſpotiſm, and to veil them with the ſemblance of juſtice, what is this in reality but to proſtitute the ſacred flame of genius?

Such are the fruits of the immeaſurable thirſt of praiſe. Who would not imagine that fame is a good we may poſſeſs without alloy? Meanwhile

Meanwhile the reverſe of all this is the truth. The man that wiſhes to be talked of has ten detractors for one panegyriſt; and the meaneſt of all his backbiters has it in his power to torment his vanity more ſeverely, than all the praiſes of the loudeſt eulogiſt can compenſate.

There is a ſort of condition tolerated in ſociety, that is to be regarded as a vicious excreſcence. Such is the citizen of a free ſtate, that contributes nothing to the public weal: ſuch is a prieſt, who deſerts the duties of the altar; ſuch is the profeſſional man, that neglects the buſineſs of his profeſſion; ſuch is the huſbandman, that does not plough; and ſuch the landed proprietor, who holds his eſtate only in truſt for another. Uma is one of theſe men; he enjoys the revenues of an abbey without being a regular clergyman*. It is ſtill worſe, when, to this character of the indolent uſurper of one profeſſion, a man unites inceſſant activity in the purſuits of baſeneſs and intrigue; when he proffers from one public office to another his venal pen. I do not mention theſe as things demonſtrated; I only obſerve that certain names call up in the memory certain ideas.

Uma has not yet ſtood forward in the debates that have ariſen in the National Aſſembly. He mines underground; and, though an orator of nature's forming, he is more at home in the intrigues of cabal, and prefers the labyrinth of the cloſet to the conſpicuous ſcenes of a tumultuous aſſembly.

* A regular clergyman is a monk; the prieſt, who takes orders merely with a view to public preaching, is diſtinguiſhed by the epithet of ſecular.

During

During the period that academies were the ſubject of converſation, Uma was ſcarcely heard of. He has little partiality for diſcourſes in the air; he aſpires to a more ſolid glory; he turns his time and his ſentences into louis, and is not idle enough to truſt to fame for the remuneration of his performances and his talents. He has ſcattered his ſeed in a penurious way, but he has reaped a golden harveſt. Your ruſtic wits know nothing of this ſecret; it is reſerved for the calculating imaginations of the metropolis.

Uma is well ſatisfied with himſelf, with the court, the miniſters, the ſtate, the church, the academy. He recollects with leſs complacency the unpoliſhed deciſions of the public voice.

A reſolute adherent of the ariſtocracy, he has declared himſelf in favour of the high partiſans, and treads in the ſteps of Ludval*, that Ludval, ſo celebrated for the tempeſt of his eloquence, who is at once the delight of the court, the hope of his corps, the prop of the whole order of magiſtracy.

Uma, leſs ambitious, would content himſelf with one third, that is, with the firſt head, of the glory of Ludval.

The National Aſſembly will unfold the virtues and the views, the qualities and the defects of our men of reputation. It will not be one of its leaſt advantages, to enable the executive branch to chuſe with diſcretion the delegates of its power.

* M. Duval d'Eprémeſnil, counſellor in the parliament of Paris.

LAXEM.

LAXEM.

(Duke de Luxembourgh, Preſident of the Order of Nobleſſe.)

NOBODY has been more aſtoniſhed than Laxem, to ſee Laxem play the part of a ſtateſman. His mind aſpired not to the adminiſtration; his heart expanded not to the good of his country; his tongue uttered not the eloquence of truth; his character is without energy; his inclination a ſtranger to ambition. A youth, immolated at the ſhrine of the fair; a maturity, that has more reſemblance to the decrepitude of old age; a vehement averſion to the life of a courtier, ſeemed to afford little promiſe, that Laxem ſhould figure in the page of hiſtory.

His principal qualities are natural ability, acquired grace, a mild diſpoſition, a ſtrong love of indolence, a partiality for things ſplendid not burthenſome, and an haughtineſs of prejudice, that is ſcarcely compatible with a knowledge of men and things.

His own name is a bugbear to him. He would expect to rouſe his anceſtors from the ſleep of the tomb, if he apoſtatiſed to principles, that degrade not that nobility of blood, but that raiſe from the duſt of oppreſſion, creatures, that poſſeſs the characteriſtics of man, and that nothing but abuſe has held ſo long in abject ſlavery. He liſtens not to the pleas of natural equity, to the urgency of circumſtances, or to the general good. He ſees nothing in his dreams,

dreams, but the ſtaff of conſtable of France; and would conceive, that he was involving his poſterity in indelible diſgrace, if he bequeathed them an example of democratical patriotiſm.

Laxem is like wits, thoſe who are ever on the hunt for rhetorical flowers; or like the muſical amateurs who never ſing in tune; or like the painters, who neglect deſign, and ſtudy nothing but colouring. The naked figure of truth appears in his eyes diſguſting. He dreſſes this daughter of heaven in the ornaments of a fine lady, ignorant that her true glory is to appear juſt what ſhe is. If he be to relate a fact, he adorns it with flouriſhes; if he wiſh to aſtoniſh, he has recourſe to exaggeration; if his ſubject be ſterile, he adds to it heterogeneous materials; if it be deficient in intereſt, he ſupplies the defect; if it be abrupt, he fills up the vacancy; and imitates thoſe poets, who hide the ſterility of their fable under a multiplicity of epiſodes, and loſe themſelves in a crowd of agreeable fictions. I might have expreſſed my idea in a fewer words, but there are moments when conciſeneſs is an error.

If Laxem had been a little more ſtrict in his mode of reaſoning, a little more verſed in the hiſtory of his country, a little better acquainted with the rights of the people and the king, a little leſs the ſlave of imperious prejudice, he would have gained a multitude of admirers. But, if we do nothing more than repeat the arguments of other men, if we endeavour to accommodate the affairs of the nation to our petty habits, if a mind, unaccuſtomed to the dictates of truth, do not ſubmit to the leſſons of thoſe to whom ſhe is better known, not only

we

we can obtain no conſiderable ſucceſs; but it will be much to be feared, that we ſhall give occaſion to the raillery of wits, who laugh as readily at a duke or peer of the realm, as they would at a common-councilman.

Two thouſand deputies, ſuch as Laxem, would never form a conſtitution. Elegant phraſes, well-turned ſarcaſms, with here and there a trait of genius, might occur; but to regulate a proceeding, to prepare a plan, to compoſe a ſyſtem, to raiſe an edifice, all this is totally out of the reach of an agreeable courtier, a poliſhed Frenchman. We are formed for routs, for the theatre, for parties of pleaſure, but not deeply to diſcuſs a continued ſubject, or to develope the receſſes of philoſophy and legiſlation. If ſuch be the general character of the French, it is not Laxem that will afford an exception. Gay, ſarcaſtical, of a pleaſant converſation, he is neither deliberate nor contemplative, neither a philoſopher nor an œconomiſt*.

* The œconomiſts are a ſet of philoſophers, who conſider agriculture as the only riches of a nation, who recommend an equal land-tax as the only ſpecies of public contribution, and conceive the land-owners to have an excluſive right to dictate the laws of their country. The count de Mirabeau, as well as the marquis his father, the marquis de Condorcet, the late M. Turgot and others, are adherents of this ſyſtem, and conceive, that all ſound principles of government may be deduced from it as inferences.

LINACOURT.

LINACOURT.

(*Duke de Liancourt, Maſter-general of the Wardrobe.*)

AN honeſt, but dull man, who has that kind of right judgment, that we call common ſenſe, is eaſily pardoned for the want of penetration, or an inability properly to explain himſelf. A man, moderate of underſtanding, but aſſuming in diſpoſition, who has that kind of pretenſion, the ſworn daughter of ignorance, upon which men beſtow the appellation of fatuity, is mocked at and deſpiſed by whoever takes the trouble to obſerve the incoherence of his proceedings. It was Linacourt that gave occaſion to theſe reflections.

Shall figure, birth and fortune for ever preſerve this unaccountable aſcendancy over our opinions? If Linacourt were ſtripped of theſe, what would he have left? The one renders him the tyrant of the fair ſex, the other intoxicates him with pride, the laſt makes him overbearing and inſolent: inſolent he would remain.

He has found means to get elected to the ſtates-general. The title of duke impoſes upon your provincial electors. Theſe lofty courtiers aſſume for a ſhort period affability and condeſcenſion, and the third eſtate, as yet unacquainted with its own importance, does not withdraw itſelf but by imperceptible degrees from the yoke of prejudice. This yoke becomes doubly irreſiſtible, when exaggerating rumour has

has told, that a man poſſeſſes the ſmiles of his ſovereign, and can exert beyond common example the influence of patronage.

It would be ridiculous to look for ſevere morality in a courtier; but there is a vaſt diſtance between the ſtrictneſs of virtue and the impudence of profligacy. Never did the order of nobles advance ſuch lofty pretenſions, and never did their manners ſtamp upon them ſuch indelible diſgrace.

If we lived in that celebrated age, when the ſtrictneſs of honour made contracts unneceſſary, when the delicacy of *propriety* preſided over all the arrangements of life, when the delicacy of *ſentiment* produced unblemiſhed manners, when the generous humanity of the great prevented the diſtreſſes of the people, when ſincerity and frankneſs characteriſed a man of birth, we might then pay homage at once to dignity of rank, and the beauty of virtue. But now, when a hungry nobility are ever on the watch for the good things of government, when it either ſubmits to the moſt atrocious inſults, or imagines a few drops of blood are ſufficient to efface them, when the commerce of the ſexes is a ſhameful tiſſue of villainy and falſehood, when a man in place never grants a favour, however humbly ſued for, but out of vanity and oſtentation, when lying is become an accompliſhment, gaming a trade, ambition a ſyſtem, and the arts of converſation calumny and ſcandal, at ſuch a time, I aſk, can the nobility ſtill think of aſſerting their ancient pretenſions? Do they believe, that in this enlightened age men will give them credit for the antiquity of their parchments, or the virtues of their buried

 anceſtors?

anceſtors? The world, as it grows older, does not grow better indeed; but it changes one fault for another; it ſubſtitutes for errors, that were begot in ignorance and prejudice, ideas better ſuited to the advanced ſtate of knowledge.

Undoubtedly one man is not entitled to all this maſs of reproach; but all, that breathe the ſame air and belong to the ſame corps, partake of this relaxation of principles, and are the ſport of theſe reprehenſible errors.

Linacourt has hardly one of thoſe characteriſtic traits, that mark the man. He has adorned his handſome exterior with dignity, with politeneſs, with beneficence, with military zeal, and upon an emergency with patriotiſm and popular principles. He is equally willing to be a colonel, an ambaſſador, or a miniſter of ſtate, and equally qualified for theſe different poſts. This unvarying diſpoſition to aſk for every thing, to accept every thing, to keep every thing, without conſulting our capacity, our vocation or the rights of other men, ſprings from a way of thinking in a high degree culpable, and leads to conſequences that one cannot eaſily deſcribe. But at preſent, merit is nothing, ſucceſs is all.

CADMUS.

CADMUS.

(*Duke de Châtelet, Colonel of the Regiment of French Guards.*)

CADMUS has paſſed through various ſituations, and figured in none. He was an ambaſſador, and he diſplayed an eagerneſs and impetuoſity, which could be pardoned only in a ſoldier. He is a ſoldier, and he has employed the crafty and indirect methods, that are only venial in a negociator. Into the detail of affairs he has introduced that peremptory manner, which men hate without fearing it. At court he aſſumes the bluntneſs and ſeverity, which all men are agreed to denominate affectation. In general his intentions are good, but his means are ill choſen.

The preſent generation of nobility are perfectly ſatisfied, that the people are made of clay, and that you may trample upon them with impunity. Moſt of them make no diſtinction between a reputable tradeſman and a beggar. If they ſpeak to a ſhoe-maker, a bricklayer, a taylor, a brewer *, it is always with a certain tone of contempt; as if it were in reality a diſgrace to make ſhoes, to build a wall, to cut out a coat, and to ſell beer. "He is the ſon "of nobody," ſay they; "his father was an "attorney." A man of ſome family comes from a diſtant province to Paris, in order by an employment of ſome ſort to improve his for-

* The tranſlator has ſubſtituted this epithet for that of a wine-merchant, as correſponding better with the Engliſh cuſtoms.

tune. " He is a perſon that nobody ſees, that " nobody knows." Theſe fatal ideas have made ſo ridiculous a progreſs, that you hear every day the moſt incredible abſurdities uttered with an air of perfect compoſure.

Cadmus was always afflicted with the *Nobilomanie*. He would have protected, but never ſerved the people. He is not without talents or right diſpoſitions; but he is totally unſkilled to manage men, and rule the multitude. He is ſo far active, as to hate to be quiet; but not ſo far able, as to be of any ſervice. He has one quality, that entitles him to our applauſe, he is deſirous to be adviſed. In the firſt aſſembly of notables, Cadmus was guided by a man of genius, who is now no more. This period will be one of the moſt brilliant in his ſtory, if the ſtory of Cadmus ſhall ever engroſs a few pages in the annals of his country.

The ideas now in vogue are ſo different from thoſe that reigned forty years ago, that the minds of individuals, that have not kept pace with the progreſs of the age, can ſcarcely be expected to comprehend the language that is now ſpoken in France.

To ſay that the legiſlative power ought to reſide in the nation, that a king has no right to originate taxes, that rank is a mere accidental diſtinction, that all men have an equal title to liberty, that taxes ought to bear impartially upon all orders in the community, that law and reaſon make a miniſter reſponſible for his meaſures, that the parliaments are not and cannot be any thing more than courts of juſtice, is to reaſon well from right data, is to inliſt oneſelf under the banner of the conſti-

tution;

tution; and yet these phrases, these unquestionable truths, four years ago, would infallibly have inclosed a man in the walls of the *departed* Bastile. Persons the most liberal, would have said, "Government can do no otherwise; if "people will be fools and think themselves "inspired, they must be shut out from the "order of society. He, who employs no po-"licy in his language, cannot complain if "he meet with no indulgence." These were the very expressions of a man in office, upon occasion of the imprisonment of Mr. Linguet.

Now, a man, a nobleman, a peer of France, educated in the old school, and who has remained stationary from the moment he was introduced into the world, can he think any thing else, but that the whole nation is delirious? Such is the situation of Cadmus.

The code of military discipline was written in blood; but, however terrible it be, it does not go so far as to ordain, that men should kill their fathers, their wives, their children, their brothers and their sisters. Now, if the troops, that were before quartered at Paris, had fired upon the people, all these parricides must necessarily have followed. I know very well, that there was bad generalship in suffering seven thousand men to winter at Capua; but, this error once committed, was it not necessary to abide by the consequences, and, above all, to know beforehand, that you were hastening those very evils you desired to prevent?

It is only a small number of rational beings, that are capable of calculating what a body of a million of men are able to effect. Paris, London and Calcutta require a different mode

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of policy, from any that is exemplified in the annals of hiſtory. Military men, who pretend, that diſcipline alone can compenſate the reſources of a multitude, muſt ſhut their eyes upon dreadful examples. We will mention only what the Turks did in the campaign of 1788. Two hundred and fifty thouſand Imperialiſts ſpent their force in vain, againſt this mighty maſs of men, undiſciplined but courageous, and who felt all the energies of ſanguinary reſentment, againſt enemies whom they regarded as unjuſt aggreſſors.

Cadmus! you muſt either die untimely the martyr of your good old principles; or die in your bed, a convert to new ones!

PISANI.

PISANI.

(*The Prince de Poix, one of the Captains in the Houſhold Troops.*

IF Piſani had not belonged to a family, that permits none of its members to remain completely inactive, he would have vegetated, like ſo many others we could name, and poſterity would never have known that he had paſſed fifty or ſixty years upon the face of the globe. But the Piſani permit to none of their family this happy obſcurity. In vain may nature have diſqualified them for the affairs of the world; without talents they may be, but unemployed they cannot remain. They may prove unſucceſsful in life, but they can never paſs unrewarded; and it is for this reaſon, that Piſani thinks himſelf obliged to make motions, and ever and anon to interrupt thoſe of others.

Meanwhile there is not a country in the world, except France, where people imagine, becauſe they chance to belong to a family, if not illuſtrious, at leaſt tolerably diſtinguiſhed, that it is abſolutely neceſſary they ſhould expoſe themſelves in the face of the world; that they ſhould valiantly encounter the ſhouts of contempt, that ever follow at the heels of mediocrity, when it uſurps the poſts of wiſdom or of virtue.

Piſani is a good ſort of a man; and if you pardon him five faults, nine abſurdities, four eccentricities and eleven follies, he is as blameleſs a character as you would wiſh to encounter.

ter. Take him out of the National Aſſembly, I have not a word to ſay to him. But to call Piſani to the digeſting of a conſtitution, to place Piſani in the ſame rank with Penn and Franklin and Frederic and Pitt, is too much for mortal patience to endure. It is true, every deputy cannot be a Chapelier, a Sieyes or a Mirabeau; but it is alſo true, that the diſtance between man and man in a legiſlative aſſembly ought not to be ſo utterly diſproportionate. But perhaps after all, it is the ſame thing in the preſent moment, whether a man have or have not capacity and genius.

The period of experiments is paſt. A ſtrange and reſiſtleſs terror had ſeized on the minds of men. The courtiers, embarraſſed in the midſt of viciſſitudes, that appear like wave ſucceeding wave, fluctuate now on one ſide and now on the other in the midſt of parties that themſelves had formed. They fabricate, they repent of their work, and they ſeem diſpoſed to adopt ſomething new and untried. Souls, hitherto eſtranged to the ſecrets of adminiſtration, have felt the flame of patriotiſm, while they became acquainted with the misfortunes of the ſtate, the prodigality that cauſed thoſe misfortunes, the confuſion that gave room to prodigality to introduce itſelf. Political writers, who were formerly regarded as mere eloquent declaimers, begin to inſpire apprehenſion and anxiety, and diſturb, by the energy of their predictions, that perfidious ſecurity which permitted people to ſleep on the brink of ruin. The enormous profuſions dictated by whim or oſtentation, have excited unappeaſable alarm in thoſe who were to pay

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for them. Reluctance to produce the accounts, the perpetual regiſters of misfortunes, for which we are indebted to miniſterial complaiſance, gave ſubſtance to what before was ſuſpicion. Indirect methods brought thoſe circumſtances to light, the free communication of which was pertinaciouſly refuſed; doubt and preſumption were changed into certainty. We have excuſed thoſe, who had not the courage to confeſs their faults, and to diſavow all concert with the authors of the public calamity. Thoſe, who were called upon for their opinion of plans already prepared, have conceived, that they had a right to ſuggeſt ſubſtitutes of their own. Economical reforms were ſtated; they recommended ſtill farther reforms. They extorted a promiſe that theſe reforms ſhould be executed; they were willing to be witneſſes of the execution. On the other hand, nothing was more ardently wiſhed than the diſperſion of an aſſembly, upon whom the ſtatement of abuſes made an indelible impreſſion, and who publiſhed their ideas upon the ſubject with ſo much the more confidence, as they believed themſelves neceſſary at a moment, in which their union might recal the fugitive form of credit, and reanimate the confidence, that the varying opinions of government had diſtinguiſhed. The meeting of the ſtates-general at a period, when men are ſo highly enlightened reſpecting the principles of ſocial contract, is a great event; it will attract the regards of every good citizen towards the ſubject of their deliberations. Men will give their properties, their liberties and their lives, provided they receive in exchange economy, vigilance and a

prudent adminiſtration. Miniſters, to whom it is juſt to impute every political error, will no longer be the demigods, whoſe decrees ſhall be received in awful ſilence; but men, accountable for their proceedings, from whom the public will demand a faithful detail of their conduct and meaſures. The courtiers, without reading thus clearly in the page of futurity, are able however to perceive the dawning of that day, which will diſpel the obſcurity, under favour of which they accumulated their rapid fortunes; and annihilate the ſubtle paraſite, who ſtole the fruit, that merit alone was intitled to gather. Such is the ſource of the melancholy, that diffuſes itſelf over the countenances of Verſailles. Intrigue has ſuſpended her inceſſant operations, and ſuffers her powers to remain dormant till events ſhall have determined the new order of things that is to ſucceed.

It is not from men like Piſani, that we expect the birth of order; ſufficiently happy, if they do not ſuſpend the accompliſhment of the great events, that are upon the eve of commencing. The ſlighteſt oppoſition at ſuch a moment may retard the æra of general felicity.

MITIS.

M I T I S.

(Duke de Nivernois, Miniſter of State, and one of the Forty Members of the French Academy.)

THERE are men, who have acquired a certain reputation nobody knows how, who are called to fill certain offices nobody knows why. Of this number is Mitis.

Born with that kind of ability that can produce nothing, he has made a great many nothings. Songs, operas, muſic, romances, verſes, fables, charades, feaſts and bons mots: ſongs, without point and humour; operas, that create no intereſt and excite no attention; muſic, that is an utter ſtranger to the laws of harmony, romances, that have no ſtyle; verſes that have neither ſweetneſs nor eaſe; fables, that have no application; feaſts, that have neither taſte nor wit; bons mots that were not produced by the encounter of the moment, but made in cold blood and ſtrung like an abbeſſes beads. Such is this man; ſuch is the baſis of his reputation; and it was all this wit, that got him the appointment to various embaſſies. But what embaſſies? Perhaps a compliment was to be paid; a treaty was digeſted and ready for ſigning; in a word, the formality and the mechaniſm of office have been the province of Mitis. Embaſſies have raiſed him to the rank of a miniſter. But what a miniſter*? Who has ever heard of

* See Appendix.

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one of his plans, one of his deciſions, one of his ideas? He is all intrigue; and his reſources are like his figure, inanity perſonified. Nature has copied into his perſon the portrait of his mind. Have you heard him ſpeak? you know all that is to be known of him. He is the ſhuttlecock of office, the humble ſervant of the marchioneſs de Pompadour, the humble ſervant of the counteſs du Barri, the humble ſervant of Mr. de Brienne, the humble ſervant of Mr. Necker; he eſpouſes every party, becauſe he has ~~no~~ principles. Beſide all this, he does the honours of an academician. His door is open to all the petty paraſites, who come to chant in proſe or verſe a hymn to his genius. It is ſhut upon every one, who inforces with energy the dictates of truth, and ſubmits with reluctance to the petty regulations of faſhion. He has a few antiquated miſtreſſes, by whoſe ſide he ſnores with the grace of a man of quality. A petty ſultan in the midſt of his greyhaired ſeraglio, he ſnuffs the incenſe of their adoration, or his love exhales itſelf in madrigals, and his own exploits are the fable of the piece.

To pleaſe him, it is neceſſary to be not altogether an aſs, nor altogether a man of ſenſe; to have a certain decorum in your carriage, but to be as fawning as a profeſſed wit. Mitis has the haughtineſs of a Spaniard, the craftineſs of an Italian, and the officiouſneſs of a Frenchman. From this medley reſults a being, that one miſtruſts without fearing him, and that one has neither the courage to love nor to hate.

His ſuppers fatigue, his gaiety gives one the ſpleen, his ſupercilioufneſs repulſes. For all theſe diſadvantages he affords no compenſation. His diſcretion is impotence, his virtue is cold calculation, his wit is a farrago made up of a thouſand memories. When he ſpeaks, he is harſh and unaccommodating; in liſtening to you, he mortifies; in common converſation, he deceives. His egotiſm nauſeates, his affectation wearies, his familiarity has the ſtiffneſs of condeſcenſion, his methodical flatneſs is the child of conceit.

Mitis is one of thoſe men who are never happy but in the midſt of young fools and old cats; by the one he is flattered, by the other cajoled.

Certainly then, if there be any truth in this picture, the French nation cannot fail to congratulate itſelf, to ſee ſeated in its councils a man of ſo elevated a character, capable of the moſt unbounded projects, habituated to the moſt penetrating views.

Mitis unites with this levity, this frivolouſneſs, ſo completely ridiculous in an old man, all the fanaticiſm of intolerance. With his inclination he would throw every ſpecies of liberty into chains; liberty of the preſs, individual liberty, political liberty. The principles of vaſſalage and feudality are interwoven with all his ideas; he is the moſt peremptory noble, the moſt haughty anti-citizen, that Paris has to boaſt. You ſhould hear him talk of the poor third eſtate, you ſhould have ſeen him canvaſs for his own duchy, and you could not have failed to have felt the application of two bad verſes of Cyrano de Bergerac:

Obſerve

Obſerve his mein, his vacant, cold diſdain!
'Tis pedigree, not merit, makes him vain *.

Yet Mitis has the reputation of a good natured man. What has he done to deſerve the appellation? Never did he relieve the pangs of indigence, but he has laviſhed his wealth upon courteſans. He is vindictive, cenſorious and hollow. This is one of his famous jeſts. When the Dunciad appeared, Mitis was praiſed in it; he affected to be angry. "I cannot "deviſe why the fellow praiſes me," ſaid he. "I profeſs, I know his perſon ſo little, that, "if he had bowed to me in the ſtreet, I "ſhould not have returned his ſalutation."

On another occaſion, ſpeaking of a woman, to whom he has ſince profeſſed an amorous attachment, he exclaimed,

"Chaſte to her huſband, ſhe's the wife of all mankind †."

* On ſe dit, quand on voit un pareil chevalier,
Sont-ce donc ſes ayeux qui le rendent ſi fier?

† Hors ſon mari qui n'a-t-elle pas eu?

NARSES.

N A R S E S.

(M. Necker, Miniſter of the Finances.)

NARSES is the victim of his own ambition, and the martyr of his own ſucceſs. He is the jeſt of the courtiers, and the idol of the mob. He has neither country nor friends, neither a ſeries of political principles, nor a knowledge of mankind. He ſeeks applauſe, and does not think of ſecuring eſteem. He underſtands neither the preſent nor the future. With juſt ſo much intellectual force as goads him to aſpire after the firſt offices of the ſtate, he is totally deſtitute of the talents that ſhould give them utility and fame.

His childhood was too rude and uncultivated to promiſe any brilliant ſucceſs. His education was that of a book-keeper, and his earlieſt ambition was to be rich. Repulſed by the ſex, favoured by circumſtances, ſmiled on by fortune, he amaſſed an opulent eſtate. Uncouth in his perſon, aukward in his manners, obſcure in his birth, eſteemed by no man, liked by no woman, he truſted he ſhould find in the oſtentation of wealth an equivalent for every other enjoyment.

There is an auſterity of manners, that is eaſily grafted upon an ungracious character. Every man has his plan. He who cannot gain your kindneſs, is willing to ſecure your reſpect; he aims at the eſteem that is paid like a debt, and the good name that is *taken by force*. Narſes fixed upon prudence as the engine of his ſucceſs;

ceſs; and this virtue, ordinarily ſo ſterile, became in his hands the means of promotion.

Raiſed to an elevated ſituation *, he carefully exhibited the charm of diſintereſtedneſs. The ſucceſs of this quality is infallible. He threw duſt in the eyes of the nation, and then perſuaded them to put themſelves under his guidance. Thoſe who brought their money to the treaſury he amply rewarded; and then taught the people to ſuppoſe, that the abundance, which flowed from the intereſted views of the lenders, was a tribute to the rectitude and energy of his character.

In France the great are ſeldom or ever contradicted, the fair are ſecure of their empire, the dependents of office have their allotted ſhare of patronage, a polite addreſs is ſure of ſucceeding, importunity extorts what neither judgment nor favour are diſpoſed to beſtow. In ſuch a kingdom it was new to ſee a man, who reſiſted ſolicitation, and who loved ſomething elſe better than flattery.

It was ſtill more extraordinary to ſee a man, that was deaf to inſinuation, ſhew a puerile ſenſibility to the lampoons of a nation, gay but not ſevere; to ſee him ſtoop from all his philoſophy, to pine under the anguiſh of the good humoured jeſts of the frolic and the idle, who thus became, without knowing their importance, the miniſters of vengeance for all the hapleſs victims, that bled beneath the knife of Narſes's economy.

At length he meditated the converſion of the infidels, that reſiſted his empire, and did not

* Director-general of the finances, 1776.

yield

yield to the ſtream of general deluſion. He determined to exhibit his uncommon talents in the face of day, and to unveil to an admiring nation the cauſes of a felicity, which was for ever talked of, but never felt. But this legend of miracles * made ſome men laugh, offended others, impoſed upon a few, and was diſpleaſing to all. Mankind are not willing, that we ſhould raviſh their applauſes, and impoſe it as a tax, that they ſhould give us their good word.

This great dramatical ſtroke haſtened the tragedy to a painful concluſion. To go out of place was nothing; but to retire, ſtunned with applauſe, yet forbidden to remain ſpectator of the delicious ſcene; to find the people eaſy, to catch the flame, but ſtill more eaſy to conſole themſelves for its abſence, this was doubly cruel. He fled to his ſolitary retreat †, hoping to ſee the nation undertake a pilgrimage in crouds to the ſhrine of their ex-divinity.

Here and there a ſolitary votary made his appearance. To rekindle their expiring zeal a voluminous performance was at length compoſed ‡, in which the ſecrets of the government of France were publiſhed to the world. An introduction, abounding in phraſes of ſelf-applauſe, and inſolently upbraiding a people, who had laid its author under the greateſt obligations, addreſſed itſelf to the imagination of the public, and gave them fortitude ſlowly to digeſt the tediouſneſs of three mortal volumes.

* Compte Rendu au Roi, January 1781.

† In May 1781.

‡ On the adminiſtration of the finances of France, publiſhed in January 1785.

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The book was ſeverely criticiſed; the author flew to Paris to defend it; he flattered himſelf that he had obtained the honour to be perſecuted. The thread of a ſecret intrigue was attached to the book, and the vehement apologiſts of Narſes conceived the bold deſign of conjuring once more into political life the departed ſtateſman.

In his crafty hiding-place he was rehearſing the character of a martyr, when a political rival * was imprudent enough to engage him in a perſonal diſpute. Immediately the numerous enemies of the former went over to the ſide of the latter, who gathered in greater abundance the fruits of his cynical auſterity, without however, reaſcending the eminence he had loſt. Fortune placed in the chair of finance a miniſter, who, with the ſpecious appearance of ability, was abſolutely incapable of the rank he obtained †. The exchequer grew empty, public credit diminiſhed, the people, irritated with the inſtability and the poverty of government, were heard to threaten, the ſtorm grew blacker, imperious neceſſity produced an extraordinary combination of events. Authority, harraſſed with the difficulties of the moment, recalled to the helm of affairs the miniſter, whom the voice of the public demanded ‡;—— recalled him, leſs from any conſiderations perſonal to himſelf, than to rid itſelf at once of both its embarraſſments, unpopularity and the dread of becoming bankrupt.

* Mr. de Calonne, 1787.

† Mr de Brienne, archbiſhop of Touloufe, ſince tranſlated to Sens.

‡ 25 Auguſt, 1788.

Prodigies

Prodigies were now expected. The financier expected to find a new order of things, the creditors of the ſtate regularity and ſyſtem, commerce a friend, the nation uniformity, fidelity and vigour. Men of letters demanded profound views from a member of their own fraternity; the friends of liberty, a free conſtitution under the auſpices of a republican; men of buſineſs, the revival of credit from the projects of a ſpeculating banker; the clergy, a reinforcement to the ſupport of morality from the author of the Influence of Religious Opinions *; the king, a ſhort period of tranquili y, a few days of peace, to which his royal honeſty ſo well entitled him, from a miniſter, ſo greatly extolled, ſo aſſiduouſly recalled to his memory. How many hapes have been deceived at once! And how has this happened? It is, that, in the ſhort ſpace of three years, the nation has become acquainted with its rights. Scarcely had it exerted its firſt effort to give them exiſtence, than the miniſter, aſtoniſhed and embarraſſed, ſhrunk into himſelf. Every event alarmed him. Men pointed out to him the interval he had to paſs, in order to attain the object which the nature of things demanded; and he was conſcious to one honeſt moment of diffidence and apprehenſion. But ambition rouſed him from his ſupineneſs. Urged by the inceſſant goadings of vanity and intrigue, he ſeized upon the occaſion, affording him an opportunity to ſhine. Perſuading himſelf that he had led in the van of public opinion, he yielded to the univerſal cry for a National Aſſembly.

* Publiſhed in the year 1787.

No ſooner had he entered into this great engagement with the public, than, tormented on one ſide with an anxiety to lead, and on the other apprehenſive that the machine of an aſſembled nation would be too mighty for his graſp, he became terrified at the ſcene, of which he had lifted the curtain. From that moment every ſtep he took became a blunder.

An aſſembly of Notables *, to which one order of proceeding is preſcribed by the miniſter, and another adopted by themſelves. Narſes inſpires neither confidence nor reſpect, neither the voluntary ſubjection of eſteem, nor the irreſiſtible one that we pay to beings of a ſuperior order.

Regulation of elections, almoſt every where rejected. Syſtem and balance of privileges, obſcure, indeciſive, irreſolute and hypocritical. Artificial procraſtination and delay. All theſe are the reſources of intrigue, not the emanations of genius.

Diſcourſe at the opening of the ſtates-general †, diſcovering at every turn a mind intoxicated with vanity, diſplaying an incapacity or an unwillingneſs to explain and illuſtrate: a compoſition, indecent, unmanly, out of place, betraying a narrow underſtanding and a timorous heart.

Conferences ‡, in which they rather ſtammer than diſcuſs, in which they rather grope than proceed, in which that fearfulneſs appears in all its deformity, that ſprings from a conſciouſneſs,

* 6 November, 1788.

† 5 May, 1788.

‡ From 30 May to 16 June, intended to reconcile the jarring pretenſions of the nobility and the commons.

that

that the man is unequal to his ſituation, that he is arrived at the limit, when he muſt either ſuggeſt one of thoſe grand expedients that reconcile the fluctuating opinions of mankind, or confeſs at once his imbecility and nothingneſs.

Behold then the great ſecret revealed (B), that for ten years was ſo ſucceſsfully concealed from a miſguided nation! Narſes is now diſcovered to have no digeſted plan, to want the mind that ſhould conceive one, to have neither ſkill to borrow the ideas of others, nor friends to correct his errors, and prompt him how to diſcharge a taſk, that a vulgar mortal ſhould never have undertaken.

Narſes would give all his fortune, and half the remaining years of his life, to ſave France from the misfortunes in which he has involved it. No indirect view has miſled him; his integrity is ſpotleſs; his intentions are of the pureſt kind. But he has conſulted only his ambition, and never examined his capacity. He perſuaded himſelf, that the deſire of doing well, and a few ſcattered remnants of preparation, would make him equal to the neceſſities of the public. He has been willing not only to do every thing, but to do it unaſſiſted. When he entered upon adminiſtration, the other ſatraps of government were no longer thought of; alone he fixed the regards of men, alone he was the centre of their hopes.

During the firſt months of his reign a kind of juſtice to his character impoſed ſilence. "Give him time to exert himſelf," exclaimed his partiſans. The ſtates-general once announced, every thing was deferred to the era of

regene-

regeneration. All that was neceſſary, was to gain that period without eclat, without a total ſuſpenſion of the faculties of government. The period arrives. We ſee nothing of the genius of a ſtateſman; we ſee the tricks of a juggler, who now appears and now hides himſelf. He has not courage to embrace the party of the people; he is afraid to have his overtures repulſed by that of the nobleſſe. He flatters himſelf, that he ſhall find in the mediating clergy, a party, that will moderate the effervescence of the other two, and counteract their dangerous exceſſes.

It is then paſt a diſpute, that Narſes is not the man we took him for. But though he is not all we could deſire, may it not be better to maintain him in his ſituation, than to incur the riſk of a change? This is the queſtion we proceed to diſcuſs.

Narſes has the people on his ſide. He is economical, the friend of order, and an excellent arithmetician. The pride, which devours him, ſupplies the place of a public ſpirit that he can never poſſeſs. His perſonal credit may be ſerviceable to the empty exchequer in a moment of diſtreſs. Foreign nations imagine that he is a ſtateſman, and think France happy to have her finances in the direction of a man, ſo pure, ſo active. His inflexibility is happily formed to encounter the obſtinacy of money-lenders, the indiſcretions of government, the avidity of courtiers, the importunate ſolicitations of the fair ſex. If the nation be reſolved to fill up all the deficiencies that ignorance and diſſipation have made, may ſhe not derive conſiderable utility from a man, ſkilled in the mechaniſm

chnaiſm of collection, and the ſcience of financial verſatility? This is without doubt all that the moſt enthuſiaſtic admirer could alledge in favour of Narſes.

His antagoniſts will reply; If Narſes would confine himſelf to theſe employments, no doubt it would be right to keep him. But, if he have always the ambitious itch of going out of his ſphere, it then becomes us to conſider, not what he might do, but what he does. Can we conceal, that he foments diviſions among the different orders, not by irritating them one againſt the other, but by inducing them to hope that the royal authority will declare itſelf in favour of the party to which he ſhall promiſe it. If adminiſtration only were to be conſidered, perhaps his advice is as good as that of another; but we deſire a conſtitution. Now, if we examine his principles, if we conclude either from his ſilence, or from what he has ſaid, Narſes cannot be admitted to the formation of a conſtitution.

His principles are borrowed from the ſchool of the moſt perfect deſpotiſm. We have ſeen them developed and brought before the public by himſelf (C).

In his diſcourſe at the opening of the National Aſſembly, he does not ſay a word about the conſtitution. The affectation of calling the attention of the repreſentatives to the finances only, could not have been the reſult of mere aukwardneſs (D).

His conduct in the ſingle buſineſs of the election for Paris, proves, that he never aimed at that union, which can be the only ſource of conſtitutional regulations.

Is

Is it not nearly the greateſt of all poſſible inconveniences, to fluctuate for ever in indeciſion and doubt? Has he a ſyſtem carefully concealed beneath the veil of his myſterious prudence, or does he hide nothing under theſe artificial appearances, but mere inanity? What does he intend? Will he furniſh arms to the ariſtocracy? Will he favour the demagogues? Does he want to be king? Is he deſirous to preſerve the power of his maſter? Is he anxious that the laws ſhould be omnipotent? Every thing is probable; nothing can be demonſtrated (E). If it be neceſſary to reſume once more the reins inconſiderately beſtowed, foreign nations will exclaim: "Thoughtleſs Frenchmen! you have intruſted your happineſs to a ſtranger, from whom you had no pledge either of fidelity or talents. You have tried a Mazarine and a Law, and in defiance of experience you have given once more into the ſame ſnare. Expect to feel the effects of it!" What could we anſwer to ſuch an apoſtrophe?

To complete a demonſtration ſo long reſiſted, let us in the laſt place enquire, what is a miniſter? and let us impartially compare the picture and the reality.

What ought to be the qualifications of a miniſter in one of the great courts of Europe? He ſhould be a man, whoſe temper nothing can intimidate, and yet not too ready to adopt any of thoſe vaſt projects, with the conception of which the imagination is delighted, but which ought not to be executed but after the matureſt deliberation. He ſhould be animated with the deſire of glorioufly filling his career, and yet not too haſty in fixing upon its characteriſtical features.

features. He ſhould be tenderly attached to his country, and yet not a ſlave to the ſilly prejudice, which repreſents it as the excluſive aſylum of capacity and talents What an aſſiduous cultivation ought to have improved this rich and genial ſoil? The knowledge of men that is to be derived from hiſtory, combined with what paſſes immediately under our eyes. That obſervation of things which depends upon perſonal inſpection, and that compariſon of intereſts to which genius only is adequate. An intimate acquaintance with that department of hiſtory, which exhibits treaties, concluded, altered, rejected; which includes projects, abandoned, reſumed, well and ill executed, enforced with vigour, or proſcribed with violence. How many talents are neceſſary to enable a man to appear with advantage, and to gain the confidence of the perſons to whom he addreſſes himſelf? A clear and perſpicuous ſtyle, accurate and diſtinct ideas, great command of language, great ſtrength of character, ſeducing manners, the maſtery of the paſſions, rapidity of execution, coolneſs in the midſt of tumult, a ſolid judgment, a never-failing penetration, the art of concealing all theſe advantages, and the ability of diſcovering enough of them to overawe and ſubdue the underſtandings of mankind. All theſe gifts are nothing without the talent of employing them. To maintain the dignity of your maſter, without engaging in unneceſſary wars; to guard againſt the weakneſs of temporiſing, that doubles our calamities, while it delays the application of a remedy; to guard with ſtill more jealouſy againſt

that

that precipitation, which the vulgar, fond of a buſy ſcene, miſtake for the rapidity of genius; to watch over the movement of foreign courts, without having recourſe to the baſe inſtrumentality of ſpies; to penetrate in a period of tranquility into the arſenals of an enemy; to prepare at a diſtance the means of defence; to regard the beſt conſtructed treaty as only a ſuſpenſion of arms:——in the very *tempeſt and whirlwind* of affairs, to call to your aſſiſtance that firmneſs, which ſurmounts a thouſand obſtacles; that felicity of reſource, which defeats the moſt pertinacious oppoſition; ambition; a courage, that holds calamity in contempt; a ſkill, that improves victory, that foreſees ſurpriſes, that repairs misfortunes, that encounters ſucceſs with ſucceſs, that bears up againſt temporary miſcarriage; a ſkill, ſtill more uncommon, to ſecure the eſteem of Europe, to become the dread of your rivals and the dependence of your friends; an art, almoſt more than human, to make the luſtre of your own talents reflect back on your maſter, and to perſuade your neighbours that the advantages you poſſeſs reſult from the combination of talents that exiſts in your country. To this aſſemblage of qualifications, that is almoſt viſionary, it is neceſſary to add, decent and reſpectable manners; a diſintereſtedneſs, ſo pure, that it is acknowleged by your very enemies; an indifference for the eclat of the moment in compariſon of the ſuffrage of poſterity; a love of labour, of order and of virtue; that ſimplicity, which is the characteriſtic trait of a great man; in fine, that philoſophical contempt

tempt for unjuſt cenſure, which can never exiſt till you have firſt attained a poſſeſſion very eaſy in appearance, incomparably difficult in reality, the *eſteem of yourſelf*.

RABIN.

*(M. Barentin, Keeper of the Seals *.)*

THE father of Rabin was a man of narrow views, abſent and comic in his manner, full of Compliment, full of the milk of human kindneſs. If an aſtrologer had told him that his ſon was deſtined to fill the firſt office of magiſtracy, he would infallibly have toſſed his intelligencer out at window for his pains. Wretched ambition, to what a degree doſt thou blind us? The misfortune is not, to be one of the herd, but to accept an office incompatible with that character.

Rabin wiſhes to be a magiſtrate, and he has not the requiſite energy; he wiſhes to be a courtier, and has not the ſuppleneſs of one; he wiſhes to be, and indeed muſt be an orator, but, alas! he has no words. Unfortunate ſtruggle between his place and his capacity, in which Rabin is always undermoſt!

I know not by what fatality it is that an unqueſtionable mediocrity, a mere inanity, has become the characteriſtic of the preſent moment. There is not a man in office, that does not ſeek, by temporiſing and the ſubtlety of his management, to hide his want of capacity. The men and the times are at war with each other.

The man that wiſhes to be uſeful, muſt begin by thwarting individuals whoſe proſperity

* He was one of the fugitives at the period of the deſtruction of the Baſtile.

depends

depends upon the calamity of the public. The man, that is desirous to further a necessary change, is of course the satirist of established modes; and, if he consent to accommodate his proceedings to the circumstances in which he is placed, he is lost for ever; the abuses with which he struggles are too mighty for him; the courtiers penetrate his designs and circumvent him before he has realized them. Sometimes they praise his abilities, but accuse him of dishonest views; sometimes they assert the integrity of his views, but alas, his genius is unequal to them. Has he weaknesses? In their representation they are metamorphosed into essential defects? they become vices; has he vices? they are crimes. Is he invulnerable on this side? he is made the butt of ridicule and satire.

The man, who possesses neither distinguished birth, nor extraordinary talents, nor the peculiar favour of his prince, cannot possibly fill a distinguished office. His friends are weary of assisting him; his creatures gladly shake off the galling yoke of gratitude; his enemies breathe vengeance; the great despise him; knaves thwart them; fools give him the ass's kick; the popular cry pursues him; dismissed with ignominy, he finds himself exhausted with the efforts he made to resist his fall, and he scarcely opposes the unjust calumny, that would rob him of the merit of what he has actually performed.

Why these reflections? what have they to do with Rabin? I will reply by an anecdote. There is in England one George Alexander Stevens, a man of ready wit: you set before him

him maſks taken in wax, or buſts ſuitably ornamented with friſure or perriwig. Theſe maſks ſuggeſt to him a ſet of ideas; he aſcribes to them a character; he predicts that of the perſons from whom they were taken. Such is my preſent purſuit. The reflections in which I have indulged have not led me far from my ſubject.

Rabin fills the place of a man, who arrived, we are told, "by one ſubmiſſion and another to "the higheſt ſituation. He was neither the "man of the king, nor the man of the peo-"ple, but the mere creature of fortuitous "events." It may be, that this exile, had he been permitted to reſume his ſituation, would have adopted different principles. He would then have been uſeful; for he wanted neither courage nor ability. Let us confeſs with reſpect to this man, that he has no right to complain of all the harm that was ever ſaid of him; but he has a right to complain, that the good, which might have compenſated the harm, was ſuffered to paſs unnoticed. He was more deſirous to be talked of, than to acquire ſolid reputation; more formed for the venturouſneſs of enterpriſe, than for the digeſtion of a ſyſtem; more diſpoſed to truſt in the luckineſs of his ſtar, than in the capacity of his mind. His defects he has in common with moſt other miniſters.——But let us ceaſe this digreſſion, and return to Rabin. It is unneceſſary. I have already ſaid more of him than poſterity will care for; and, in ſaying one word of Ch. M—*, I have

* The author probably means by the perſon here mentioned, and whoſe character he ſeems to have been delineating in

have painted Rabin better, than I could have done in twelve pages. A word to the wise.

in this and the three preceding paragraphs, the chevalier Chrétien François de Lamoignon, the predeceſſor of M. Barentin in the office of keeper of the ſeals. But his reflexions are too vague, for us to pretend to pronounce with conſiderable confidence.

MORINVAL.

(Count de Montmorin, Secretary of ſtate for Foreign Affairs.)

THERE are Albinos in politics as well as in natural hiſtory. They are not, as M. de Paw pretends, a degenerate race of men, but a ſpecies by themſelves, without muſcular force, without ſtrength, and without the faculties of compariſon and ratiocination. Such is Morinval. Polite, lively, dextrous, civil, complaiſant, but equally incapable of ſupporting the weight of Europe, and of entering into the plan of interior regeneration. If indeed it could be effected at a ſupper or in a ſelect council, if the people could be induced to hear reaſon by fine preambles and the crafty eloquence of a proclamation, if the treaſury could be filled by a lottery or a loan, by perpetual fluctuations, or by the ſale of a few public offices, Morinval would play his part as well as another, and in his own little path would infallibly arrive at the temple of glory. But at a period like the preſent, when the nation is ſhaking off the yoke of precedent, when ſhe is contented to delegate her authority, but requires a public account, in the room of the myſterious proceedings of former miniſters, when each citizen is invited, to examine for himſelf the employment of the revenue to which himſelf has contributed, Morinval draws back aſtoniſhed, and dares not become even the ſecondary of

that

that Coloſſal power, which he contemplates with terror.

There are offices of adminiſtration, that it is eaſy to find men qualified to fill. Does death or diſmiſſion render them vacant? Men of weak underſtanding and unchecked arrogance canvas for them with a preſumption, that fails not ſpeedily to be rewarded with exile and diſgrace; but, in the ſhort interval between theſe and the appointment, the judgment of monarchs is miſled, and the ſplendor of nations eclipſed.

The vulgar imagine, that to fill certain poſts nothing is neceſſary but to give audiences, to have intelligent clerks and a ſeat in his majeſty's council. It is true, that, if the emperor could not boaſt of a Kaunitz, Pruſſia of a Hertſberg, Naples of an Acton and England of a Pitt, affairs might ſtill proceed without conſiderable injury; but to place in the ſcale againſt ſuch men, a little, impertinent, ignorant, ſuperficial Frenchman, a courtier, ſkilled in twiſting and untwiſting the thread of an intrigue, who changes his opinions every day becauſe he has in reality no opinions at all; ſuch a proceeding is one of thoſe ſolemn jeſts, to which nations would frequently fall a victim, were it not well known that Providence mends more blots, than knaves and fools are accuſtomed to commit.

Two years have not yet marked the adminiſtration of Morinval with one epocha, with one inſtance of ſucceſs, with one concerted plan. Probably he was unwilling to make a gap in hiſtory. He would have judged wiſer, if he had made one in adminiſtration, and if, like a

ſecond Curtius, he had precipitated himſelf into the abyſs of a profound retreat for the ſalvation of his country. I could name at leaſt a dozen ex-miniſters, who have ſet him the example. They have perfectly found their account in it, and their country has been obliged to them. General opinion, the ſource of all deſirable praiſe, would not ſuffer the meritorious conduct to remain unrewarded. Morinval would acquire the honour of a ſacrifice, which by intrigue and contrivance he may procraſtinate, but which he can ſcarcely expect ultimately to avoid.

It would be unjuſt to reproach a man with the narrowneſs of his capacity. Nature diſtributes her gifts as ſhe will; and, what is ſtill more, men are not maſters of their own education. But the inexcuſable error is, to take upon ourſelves burdens to which our ſtrength is unequal, and to ſacrifice the ſtate at the ſhrine of our perſonal vanity. When an employment evidently demands a maſs of information that we have not been able to procure, what demon urges us to accept of it? And ought I to be ſilent, when the queſtion is, whether we ſhall riſk the bleſſings of peace and the honour of my country? I will applaud the zeal of Morinval as much as you will; I will weary fortune with prayers in his behalf; my good wiſhes ſhall lift him to the ſummit of royal favour; but I will intreat and conjure him to deſcend from too eminent a ſituation.

There is a ſort of merit, whoſe proper ſoil is in the courts of princes. All men fill places of rank and ceremony equally well; or, if by chance they are ill diſcharged, it is of no ſort of conſequence.

conſequence. The court, Morinval, the court demands you; nature has deſtined you for it, and your mode of ſpeaking, of ſerving, of ingratiating yourſelf, of exiſting, ſeconds incomparably the purpoſes of nature.

LABUIS.

(M. Bailly, Mayor of Paris, one of the Forty Members of the French Academy, and author of a celebrated Work upon the Hiſtory of Aſtronomy.)

ONE of thoſe men of ſenſe, who having always exerciſed their minds upon ſcientifical truth, become, as it were, the repreſentatives and archetypes of reaſon, and who in an untried career, enlightened by her rays, advance with ſufficient deliberation, not to incur the hazard of miſcarriage. Of ſuch a ſituation we may eaſily trace the effects.

Hence that moderation, which does not derive from the ſyſtematical digeſtion of a plan, and the certainty of realiſing it in the execution; but which flows from that apprehenſiveneſs of error, natural to him who undertakes to ſpeak in a foreign language. Hence that timidity, which we may well excuſe in a man, who finds himſelf ſituated in the middle place, between the king and the nation, between the fear of diſpleaſing and the deſire to be uſeful, between the love of virtue and inexperience, between perſonal integrity and courtly intrigue.

To preſide with ſucceſs in a national aſſembly *, it is requiſite, that one ſhould be admitted into the ſecret of the national wiſhes, that one ſhould hold the rudder, and ſteer the veſſel of

* M. Bailly was the firſt perſon who filled this office, having preſided from 3 June to 2 of the following month.

the

the ſtate, along the tempeſtuous ſea of contending opinions, and amidſt the rocks and quickſands of perſonal intereſts.

Then it is, that the knowledge of mankind is the moſt precious of all qualifications. Happy the man, called to this diſtinguiſhed ſituation, who can diſtinguiſh the courtier from the patriot, the man of arrogant pretenſions from the man of ability, the ſlave of ambition from the lover of mankind.

One may be learned, logical and ſhrewd, one may be ſkilful to parry the arguments and objections of a private circle, nay, poſſeſs a thouſand claims to public eſteem, and yet want the eſſential qualities of a preſident. Such things have been, and ſuch things may occur again.

A cold manner is not expreſſive of true firmneſs, any more than bland and gentle qualities are always expreſſive of irreſolution. Too much reſerve leads to miſtruſt; too pliable a temper encourages the neglect of diſcipline and order. What a ſtrange thing is that, which men have agreed to denominate virtue? It verges with hardly any exception upon a neighbouring vice, and a mathematical line is all that ſeparates them.

Has Labuis given occaſion to theſe diſquiſitions? Yes: not that they are abſolutely applicable to him, but that they infallibly ſtart up in the mind of him that diſſects him. They are not therefore altogether impertinent; for, while I am painting theſe portraits, no idea can enter my mind, that is not ſuggeſted by the countenance I undertake to copy.

While Labuis was nothing, people ſuppoſed that he would have been ſomething, if he were

were truſted with an intereſting ſituation; when he became ſomething, every body ſaw that Labuis was nothing. Such is the hiſtory of many a Frenchman. The faculty of ſpeaking with facility and eaſe miſleads us. May it not be ſuſpected, that thoſe, who aſſerted, that the nation was not ripe for aſſembling the ſtates-general, were not altogether in the wrong? Who does not ſee, that the people, intoxicated with a pretended independence, will indulge in repeated exceſſes; that the clergy, menaced with a reduction of their credit, will exert a double ſhare of ingenuity to recover their ancient ſituation; that the nobility, ſeeing themſelves reduced to their juſt value, will combat for the chimeras in the contemplation of which they fondly indulged; and that, in a maſs thus conſtituted, there will not be found force enough to fix immoveably the foundations of a conſtitution? It is very poſſible, that better deputies could not have been elected; but it is by no means clear, that, ſuch as they are, they are ſufficient for their undertaking. We have yet to expiate a complete century of wit, gaiety and politeneſs. When we ſhall have renounced our characteriſtic frivolity, we ſhall not immediately be fit for the office of governing ourſelves. To Louis the Fourteenth and the regent, we were indebted, for the petty advantage of being the moſt poliſhed nation in Europe; to Louis the Sixteenth we ſhall perhaps be indebted for the dawn of a regeneration, of which our grandchildren will reap the benefits. It is for them that we ſow, and it would be folly to expect that we ſhould ourſelves enjoy the fruits of our meritorious labours.

PHI-

PHILARETAS.

(The Marquis de la Fayette, commandant of the Militia of the City of Paris.)

PHILARETAS, finding that he had all on a ſudden become an hero at a very cheap rate, conceived, that it would be equally eaſy to paſs himſelf for a ſtateſman. There is no war at preſent, and in the interim he has turned politician. Nature has organiſed him no better for an orator, than ſhe had formed him for the ſchool of Mars; but, in ſpite of nature, he has declaimed, juſt as he conquered.

The misfortune of Philaretas is, to have great pretenſions and trite ideas. He has undertaken to protect the cauſe of liberty; not that he feels any vocation in her favour, not that he wiſhes to foſter and aſſiſt her; but he hopes, by taking the ſide of the leaſt numerous party, to be better obſerved; and, if he be condemned to be ſilent at Paris, at leaſt he is determined to be known in the country, where he raves like one poſſeſſed.

Philaretas has had the ingenuity to perſuade himſelf, that he is the author of the American revolution; and accordingly he prepares to be one of the prime actors in the revolution of France. He miſtakes clamour for glory; the ſurpriſe of a cottage for a martial victory; the compliment of a ſword for an undecaying monument: the language of ceremony for the breath of immortal fame; the routine of promotion for the reward of virtue; and the diſ-

play

play of conſtitutional valour for the conſummation of heroiſm.

He loves not the court, becauſe he feels himſelf a ſtranger to it; he loves not ſociety, becauſe every man is there confined to his niche; he loves not the ſex, becauſe, if they do not lead to fortune, they ſubtract from reputation. On the other hand, he loves clubs, becauſe there one gathers up the ideas of other men, to produce them upon a proper occaſion as our own; he loves foreigners, becauſe they are not very ſtrict and ſcrupulous in anatomiſing us; he loves fools, becauſe they are contented to liſten and admire.

Philaretas is no author; becauſe to the character of an author there are required argumentation, diſquiſition, ſtyle. The world judges of authors with ſeverity. Are they frigid? they are deſpiſed; do they commit miſtakes? they are laughed at. But in converſation fire is rather deſired than accuracy, and ornament than depth. The man of accurate diſtinctions is there treated as a pedant; and to reaſon ill, is eſſentially neceſſary to him that would converſe agreeably.

Philaretas will remain faithful to the party he has choſen, without being very able to aſſign to himſelf the reaſons for that fidelity. He knows not the full meaning and force of the word conſtitution; he knows not the degree of power that muſt neceſſarily be reſerved to the executive authority. But the word "liberty" lights up in him the train of ambition; and he will endeavour to know what to do with it, when he thinks he has got it.

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He formerly attacked a miniſter in diſgrace *, with as little malice, as he now diſplays diſcernment. Perſons at firſt imagined, that ſome great project was about to diſcloſe itſelf, and that extraordinary diſcoveries would ſpeedily be made. No ſuch thing. Philaretas was in no ſort vindictive, and he poſſeſſed no information. He thought of nothing, but of filling with his name the mouths of the coffee-houſe ora ors, and reflections came too late to remind him, that the character of the unfortunate is regarded as ſacred by the man of true delicacy.

What can ſuch a man as Philaretas do in a national aſſembly? Neither good nor harm. His opinion will exactly coincide with that of the majority of his party. There is a ſet of people totally incapacitated to think for themſelves; they have juſt the ability to defend the opinion that another has dictated to them, and no more; and they ſecretly do themſelves the juſtice to believe, that they ſhould too frequently tarniſh their reputation, if they adhered faithfully to their own dubious and uncertain reflections.

Such is Philaretas. He deſerves a ſort of renown, becauſe he has ſurpaſſed the majority of his rivals. Perhaps he is himſelf unacquainted with the reaſon of the indulgence he has obtained. It is, that he has done a great deal with the humble means, with which nature furniſhed him. The world has applauded in him what he deſired to be, and not

* M. de la Fayette produced an impeachment againſt M. de Calonne in the aſſembly of Notables, in April 1787, a few days after his diſmiſſion from office.

what

what he was. Beſide, he has the exterior of modeſty, and connoiſſeurs only know what opinion to form upon that article.

The outlines of his military reputation are only ſketched, and the firſt war, that occurs, muſt decide upon its value. His reputation as a ſtateſman is finiſhed and complete. He will never go beyond what we have already ſeen him. Scanty of invention, of art, of energy, and of lungs, and ever on the hunt after petty ſucceſſes; the dimenſions of his cloſet are the exact counterpart of the dimenſions of his mind.

GOZLER.

(The Marquis de Clermont Tonnerre.)

YOUNG, and burning with the desire of gaining to himself a reputation, Gozler has launched himself in the sea of politics. His claims consist in an elevated name, in the rare gift of genuine eloquence, and in the extreme clearness and precision with which he developes his ideas. He has performed no prodigies of study, but he has heard and edified by the lessons of conversation, and that nearly amounts to the same thing.

Gozler stood forward with success in the business of the Paris election; animated, active, ingenious in his discourse, conciliating in his temper, he has exhibited himself in a very interesting point of view. He has indeed been less conspicuous in the assembly of the noblesse; but, when we consider how few rivals he had to apprehend in that order, it seems but just to impute this circumstance to prudence and moderation.

One point alarms me for him. What share had he in digesting the Paris instructions, the worst digested that have yet appeared, the most reprehensible in their principles, the most barren in counsel, the most destitute of liberal and constitutional views? If they were drawn up by Gozler, we are bound to subtract largely from our esteem, and to abridge greatly our praises. But the reasons to impute to him this guilt

guilt are merely circumſtantial, and we are perhaps unjuſt ſo much as to ſuſpect it.

Gozler defends his order with more eagerneſs, than true perception of their intereſts. It is ſought, he alledges, to annihilate the privileges, to ſtrip the nobility, and preſently the democracy will give laws to the ſtate. The more we examine theſe objections, the more deſtitute they appear of foundation. No power can change that which is, into that which is not. If the democratical party had formed this chimerical project, its members would be leſs ambitious to be admitted into corps, that have long been regarded with veneration. Between objecting to the preſent conſtitution of our nobility and diſputing the whole ſum of its privileges, there is an immenſe diſtance, upon which Gozler has not ſufficiently reflected. The repreſentatives of the people conſent to ratify the honorary rights; but not to pay the immenſe revenues, to which theſe diſtinguiſhed families are indebted for their ſplendor; and without which they would ſpeedily be loſt in the crowd of vulgar mortals.

Gozler has more than once ingeniouſly ſuppreſſed this eſſential diſtinction. The empire of riches is of all others the moſt potent; it is that, to which tyrants are indebted for their prerogatives. The proprietor of gold has a thouſand graces in his diſpoſal; and he, that diſpoſes of theſe graces, diſpoſes of the wills of men, which are always compelled ſooner or later to ſubmit to the urgent pleas of neceſſity. Can it be expected then, that the people ſhould voluntarily furniſh that metal, which is the inſtrument of their ſlavery; that they ſhould furniſh

niſh the great with the means of counterbalancing the original and natural force of numbers? The nation is contented, to ſupport the dignity of the throne, to contribute to our defence againſt the public enemy, to defray the expences of a prudent adminiſtration; but they are not willing, annually to enrich a tribe of ſupercilious families, who are indebted to intrigue for the affluence of their fortune.

Gozler! open your eyes, and you will perceive in your vicinity two ſingle families, who coſt the ſtate an annual ſum of thirty millions *, for the diſcharge of an office, that a clerk would perform with more exactneſs and propriety for a ſalary of ten thouſand francs †.

You will anſwer perhaps, that half theſe privileges ſo greatly envied, fall in their turn to perſons, who are raiſed from that very third eſtate of the author of theſe complaints, and that with a little patience, its members will paſs into the privileged order, and be admitted to a ſhare in their revenues. This is doubtleſs the beſt objection that could be made, becauſe it is *ad hominem*; but at the ſame time it conjures up to our imagination evils, containing in them the ſeeds of their own reproduction and that may laſt for ever.

Gozler is worthy to riſe above prejudices generally prevalent, and to place himſelf among thoſe, who nobly dare to aſſert an independent exiſtence. He has an underſtanding, to lead his contemporaries; an ambition, to riſe above obſtacles; a talent, to bear him out in honour-

* £ .1,025,000.
† £. 420.

able

able adventure; a rank, to silence the malignant and the envious; a manner, to overawe the enthusiastic and the rash; and an assemblage of qualities, that could not fail to secure his success.

ZOHOR.

ZOHOR.

(The Marquis de Condorcet, one of the Forty Members of the French Academy, author of a treatiſe upon Probabilities, a treatiſe upon the States General, the life of M. Turgot, and ſeveral other performances.)

THE merit of Zohor is of a ſolid, not of a brilliant deſcription. He paſſionately loves the friends of mankind, the friends of liberty, the friends of reaſon, and the friends of order. Eſteemed by the judicious, he is not the ſubject of vulgar panegyric. He has taken no care to obtain the friendſhip of thoſe female cabals, whoſe activity is ſo inceſſant to draw the man they favour out of his native obſcurity. He has not endeavoured to ſecure to himſelf thoſe ſplendid ſuffrages, that impoſe on the multitude. He is not anxious to be quoted in the noiſy circles of agitation and paſſion. He has lived for himſelf and his friends, and he has lived a little for glory.

Zohor, inured to thoſe profound meditations, which by means of arithmetical proceſſes change conjecture into demonſtration, is probably unadapted for thoſe turbulent diſcuſſions, which characteriſe numerous aſſemblies, thrown into fermentation by the variety of intereſts, the colliſion of paſſions, and the extraordinary criſes that may be expected to reſult. Unaccuſtomed to ſpeak in public, he cannot command the reſources of a Demoſthenes, and is unable

unable to ſubjugate the mind by the eloquence and energy of his diction.

But he amply compenſates for the want of theſe brilliant qualifications, by a ſeries of ſtudy, that enables him to diſcern what it is that will be uſeful to his country, and what are the remedies that her misfortunes demand.

Zohor is perhaps the laſt defender of that philoſophy, ſprung up in England, and received for a moment in France, the primeval cauſe of the revolution which is now taking place; that philoſophy, which would produce the happineſs of the world; if, reſtrained within proper limits, its advantages had never been exaggerated by enthuſiaſtic advocates, and never proſcribed by the apprehenſive and the timid. If Zohor do not unfurl its ſtandard like Voltaire, if he do not deify it like Diderot, it is however impoſſible to miſtake his real ſentiments, and we may ſay of him,

" He ſeeks the ſhade, but firſt he would be ſeen *."

He has invented nothing, and yet is infinitely ſuperior to ordinary writers. Why? Becauſe he has advanced and improved the art of thinking. If his imagination be parſimonious and ſcanty, his judgment is luminous and ſound; and he will prove of more real uſe to mankind, than twenty writers, that aſpire with juſtice to the praiſe of genius.

A woman, who had formerly ſome reputation, attacked him with virulence †, without be-

* Et fugit ad ſalices et ſe cupit ant videri. VIRGIL.

† The author probably alludes to the marchioneſs de Sillery, in her treatiſe entitled Religion the Source of True Felicity.

ing

ing able to draw from him a word of reply. This philoſophic moderation has been much praiſed, but little imitated.

Zohor enjoys a name, that his labours have made illuſtrious; all Europe does him this juſtice. Let it be obſerved, that extenſive celebrity is no trifling poſſeſſion, at a time, when the world appears to have conſpired for the deſtruction of mediocrity, and is agreed to repulſe with contempt the ambitious pretenders, that beſiege on all ſides the temple of renown.

One merit that belongs to Zohor, "is to "have extended the limits of Geometry, not "only through all the regions of natural ſci- "ence, but alſo into queſtions of moral con- "ſideration, which are in their own nature "complicated, fortuitous and variable. This "obſervation is perhaps matter enough for a "long winded panegyric; but we content our- "ſelves with dropping a hint upon the ſub- "jects, without undertaking a finiſhed deline- "ation."

A man ſoon becomes diſſatisfied with what he already poſſeſſes, and the ſuffrage, we had almoſt ſaid of the human ſpecies, does not content Zohor. He burns to ſeek for fame in a new career; already he regrets ſo many nights paſſed in the patience of calculation; he haſtens to plunge himſelf in the ocean of politics, and ſeeks in the tempeſt of debate for a new ſource of glory.

Zohor is altogether averſe to thoſe numerous circles, where the female ſex preſides; where they ſtamp with their anathema thoſe very works, whoſe merit they are unable to diſpute; where they loudly applaud mediocrity, when

united with a rank that may patroniſe or may perſecute; where their ſtupid lovers are encouraged for no other purpoſe, than to make of them echos, which may ſpread far and wide the deſpotic decrees of this abſolute ſenate.

He is a member of that academy, which Richelieu, who had a ſpice of the pedant, and not a grain of the philoſopher, intended to compoſe of grammatical critics. But Zohor knows better than any man living, how puerile it is to be buſied about words, when natural ſcience preſents us every year with a new phenomenon; when nature, hunted to the quick, continually ſuffers one and another of her ſecrets to eſcape her; and when commerce is at length become an object of ratiocination and ſcience.

Zohor ſtrictly conforms himſelf to the advice of his maſter and friend, the late M. d'Alembert, who uſed to ſay, that "the genuine ſage "was beneficent and kind towards every human "being, familiar in the ſociety of a few, intimate with only one."

IRAMBA.

I R A M B A.

(*Count de Mirabeau, Author of Conſiderations on the Order of Cincinnatus; Doubts reſpecting the Navigation of the Schelde; Diſquiſitions on the Bank of Saint Charles; on the Water Works of Paris; and on the Caiſe D'Eſcompte; Impeachment of the Stock-jobbers; Thoughts on Lettres de Cachet; on the Office of Stadtholder; on the Pruſſian Monarchy; Secret Hiſtory of the Court of Berlin, &c. &c. &c.*)

IRAMBA would have been one of the moſt uſeful men that ever exiſted, if his unruly paſſions had not always been at war with his genius. Like the bee, he extracts honey from every thing around him, without the baſeneſs of theft or the infliction of injury. He reſembles thoſe rivers, that in their majeſtic courſe receive the tribute of a thouſand ſtreams and the diverſified wealth of every neighbouring, mountain; and then pour into the ocean with an expanſion of ſurface, that is at once aſtoniſhing and ſublime. Controverſy animates Iramba, and gives new energy to his mind. Ardent and vigorous, he draws out the latent force of his adverſary. The antagoniſt excels himſelf, collects all his powers and qualifications, and employs every expedient of artifice and conviction. Iramba liſtens, reflects, is inſtructed; he either defeats his opponent with his own weapons, or paſſes quietly on and reſerves them for a more important occaſion.

He is preſent at a debate; the diſputants adhere ſcrupulouſly to the arts of logic, and enquire little after the dictates of perſuaſion. Diffident of their own capacity, they have recourſe to the aids of authority and the deductions of hiſtorical fact. Iramba purſues the train of their reaſoning, rejects with contempt their limping and ſlowpaced method, ſcans with a penetrating eye the facts that are ſtated, obſerves their true bearings and inference, and maſters in an hour, what muſt elſe have coſt him the ſtudy of a day.

There are men, laborious in calculation and remark, that have never aimed to acquire the art of explaining their obſervations. There are others, to whom nature has given the faculty of diſcovery and invention, but who have not the ſecret of enlightening the underſtandings of others. There are perſons, who prefer perſpicuity and elegance to the grand and the ſublime. Iramba eſtimates each man at his juſt value, hears them all, and reproduces their ideas animated with the ſplendour of eloquence. Each man recogniſes his own method of conſidering the ſubject, but he finds that method embelliſhed, and he does not dare to complain.

Men's minds are as various as their faces. This man takes his departure from a ſingle idea; but he modifies it in a thouſand ways, he applies it to a thouſand ſubjects, he builds upon it a ſyſtem of the moſt extenſive application. That man has a ſtrict and ſevere logic, he connects diſſevered principles, he conſtantly gives to the truth he would inforce the moſt irreſiſtible evidence. A third is gifted with a continual flow of uſeful conceptions, that he brings in,

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as a tribute to the general weal; he enlarges his talent by the honesty of his zeal, and he inforces his zeal by the respectability of his eloquence. Still another has made mankind his study, in the world, in books, in the midst of important action; habituated to contemplate, he sees the characters of men under all their different appearances; endowed with a felicity of description, he paints the most striking likenesses. Iramba identifies himself with these four personages; he appropriates their faculties, he increases them from his own stock, he appears a Colossus. There are many men in Iramba, but you never see any thing but himself. Surely he, who possesses the talent of engrossing human understanding, is entitled to fill the first situation! Accordingly his rivals yield to him the palm, and are contented to occupy the second place.

The herd of writers, echos of the unreflecting multitude, deny that he is entitled to all the merit of his performances. An error, if ever there was one. He conceived them all; he reared them all. The architect has indeed the columns formed to his hands, he does not paint the ceilings, he does not execute the ornaments of the building; but he drew the plan, he laid out the apartments, he choses the species of the decorations; it is he that built the palace, the workmanship of which is praised, or the defects of which are criticised. It has been said, that all comparisons have their weak sides; I assert of the present, that it is complete in all its parts (F).

Iramba does not set either his pen or his opinion to sale. He follows exactly the opposite maxim,

maxim, he puſhes it as far as it will go, and it is on that ſide perhaps, that his moral character is moſt vulnerable. It is worth while to attend to the explanation of this curious feature. He believes, that the ſecret of gaining men to your ſide and extorting their ſuffrages, is, to be always in the right; and, for that purpoſe, to utter upon all occaſions the exact truth. He adopts this method by ſo much the more willingly, becauſe no project can be more intereſting or more new, than that of ſpeaking truth. But this ſecret, evidently important as it is, leads to the moſt alarming conſequences. It not only arms againſt you a whole hoſt of enemies, but it leads to the perpetual violation of gratitude and friendſhip. He, who profeſſes to conceal nothing that may be uſeful to the multitude, muſt neceſſarily reveal the manœuvres of thoſe, who are only rich becauſe other men are ignorant. Take for example, the book entitled *Denonciation de l'Agiotage*, (Impeachment of the Stockjobbers); the maxim of ſpeaking truth in this inſtance involved the ruin of two hundred individuals. In this number there were credulous perſons, perſons drawn in by the power of circumſtances, perſons intimately connected with the friends of their deſtroyer. In this pitileſs office he diſobliges friendſhip, violates the decorums of ſociety, and ſacrifices his own feelings of gratitude at the ſhrine of that auſtere truth, which is ever inexorable, and diſdains to parley with the affections and charities of human ſociety. To make myſelf ſtill better underſtood, I will ſuppoſe that Iramba had written a book, like the Secret

Hiſtory

Hiſtory of the Court of Berlin *; he would have thought of but one object, the inſtruction and illumination of his conſtituents; he would have imagined, that the conſideration of humbling the vanity and ſelf-importance of individuals was of no weight, in compariſon with the neceſſity and indiſpenſableneſs of truth; an apprehenſion of this ſort would not have ſtopped him for a moment. He gratified no enmity againſt any individual; he ſaw nothing in them but mediums for the inculcation of truth. It may be perceived from theſe illuſtrations, to what lengths the principle of exhibiting truth in all its evidence may eaſily lead.

It is ſo true that Iramba is irritated, tormented with this propenſity, that he of conſequence neglects extremely the gratification of perſonal revenge. What would become of a maſs of pigmies, if Hercules raiſed up his club? Would ſo much as a trace of his adverſaries remain upon the field of battle, if this Achilles deſcended into it in his celeſtial panoply?

Amidſt the unruly paſſions that quartered themſelves upon his youth, after an adoleſcence, deſerted and untrained, by a father, too eagerly occupied about his own fame to lay the foundation of that of his ſons, and by a mother, who was continually buſied in odious diſputes with her own ſervants, commenced thoſe frequent follies, that rendered too conſpicuous a young man, whom the ardour of his paſſions and the effervescence of the ſublimeſt talents, converted into a ſort of prodigy. Driven to extremity by

* One of the moſt extraordinary and intereſting political productions of the preſent age.

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the ſeverities of a father, buſied in inventing the means of repairing his errors, embarraſſed to diſcover ways of ſupporting the dignity of his birth, a circumſtance upon which a young man lays an extraordinary ſtreſs, it was eaſy that he ſhould loſe himſelf in the road to happineſs. The enemies of Iramba diſcovered in that ſtormy period a long ſeries of errors. The philoſopher will ſtudy it, that he may obſerve; how the ſame man, whom paſſion blinds in the firſt inſtance, afterwards finds in himſelf the power of eſcaping from the labyrinth in which the love of pleaſure entangled him; in how great a degree the miſtakes of the heart furniſh pretences to malignity, and diet for calumny, and how far circumſtances change the character of actions. There is a chain that connects overſight with imprudence, imprudence with error, error with the breach of propriety, the breach of propriety with miſcarriage, miſcarriage with injuſtice, injuſtice with guilt, guilt with profligacy, and profligacy with all that is enormous. Iramba ſought to be agreeable, he found himſelf beloved, he undertook to ſeduce, he conſummated his deſign, he raviſhed the conqueſt he had made from the vengeance of jealouſy and the arms of power. In the eye of the law this was a rape, a crime; in the eye of morality it was unjuſt; in that of philoſophy, it was a delirium, excuſed by the fever of love, and the violence of an inflammable period of life.

He, that would judge fairly of Iramba, muſt forget the multitude of falſe calculations and inconſiderate procedures, of which he has been at once the actor and the victim; muſt recollect, that he has been puniſhed with a ſeverity,

that

that he has been treated with an unkindneſs, beyond all example; muſt allow, that few men are endowed like him with a diſpoſition, ardent to improve, as well as prompt to abuſe every thing; and muſt confeſs that this volcano has thrown out a ſubſtance, capable of being greatly uſeful to a nation. Misfortune, or rather the occaſion to ſtruggle againſt it, has given him fortitude and courage; the neceſſity of defending his character has taught him the art of public ſpeaking and made him an orator; compulſory ſolitude, and the hope of beguiling the hours of retreat have converted application and the art of improving the hours of leiſure into habit.

His principles are ſound and moderate, and, when conſidered as a ſyſtem, their truth will be irreſiſtible. I apply to them the name of *moderate*, for the inſtruction of thoſe, who confound warmth of expreſſion and paſſionateneſs of judgment. He is even capable of an unlooked for compoſure in the midſt of popular violence. It is but little ſuſpected, that he is one of thoſe men, over whom true genius, real ability has the greateſt aſcendancy. He eſtimates lightly enough a literati, an academician, the laborious conſtructor of pompous nothings; but he conceives an involuntary and a deep reſpect for him, who has reſources in his own mind, and who has improved real talents by the acquiſition of uſeful knowledge.

An inconteſtible proof of a great mind is to be found in this circumſtance, when a man attaches himſelf to one object, and renounces every other ſpecies of glory. This is to demand no ſmall ſacrifice, eſpecially from men

of extenſive capacity, and at a period, when to obtain the verdict of renown, it is neceſſary to prefer a clear and indiſputable title. Iramba himſelf will ſee, in this firſt ſitting of the ſtates-general, that, if he has been the firſt to ſeize upon the palm of eloquence, he has rivals, that will aſpire to a ſhare in the prize.

He aſſociates in his literary labour minds of too feeble a texture. Philoctetes was the companion of Hercules, becauſe, wherever Hercules was not, Philoctetes was a hero. Diomedes was worthy to enter the liſts with his Achilles. But a S—, a N—, and a N—*, are not qualified even for the ſuite of Iramba. He becomes enthuſiaſtic in a man's favour, and his officious imagination blindly aſcribes to him qualities, the want of which his ſounder judgment ſpeedily detects.

Iramba has not always been judged with this impartiality. Peace to their libels? Who would move the excrements of this infectious ſink, and expoſe himſelf to the exhalations? But a pamplet has appeared, (K) in which a celebrated painter has delineated in the true ſtyle this man, who forces his enemies to hear him, if he do not force them to be ſilent.

* Perſons concerned in the Courier de Provence, a New's letter, publiſhed by Mirabeau. The author in the preceding ſentence has confounded Diomedes and Patroclus.

ANTENOR.

ANTENOR.

(Count d'Antraignes, Author of ſeveral Publications upon the Subject of the States general.)

ANTENOR is by nature a courtier, and thinks himſelf a republican. Do you aſk, what is his opinion upon great conſtitutional queſtions? Antenor cannot tell you. The ſyſtem of liberty——opens a vaſt field to an ardent imagination, eager in the purſuit of the wonderful and the ſublime. To defend that ancient nobility, which has exhibited itſelf in ſo ſtriking colours in an hundred periods of our hiſtory,—appears alſo to be a very intereſting employment. To ſerve a king, whom circumſtances perhaps embarraſs, but whoſe probity and public ſpirit render him ſo peculiarly engaging,—is in the eyes of Antenor a ſacred an indiſpenſable duty. To afford one's aid to a nation, which has quitted its ancient ſlavery, only to be ſubjected to a condition, perhaps more ſevere, but leſs humiliating,—inflames his zeal. Antenor would wiſh to play theſe four characters at once, equally anxious to be the man of the people and the man of the king; a nobleman and a citizen; the adherent of republicaniſm and the advocate of ariſtocracy:

" Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong,
" He's every thing by turns, and nothing long*."

* Tous les gouts á la fois ſont entrés dans ſon ame,
Tout prince á ſon hommage, et tout parti l'enflamme.

Antenor

Antenor eſpouſes with ardour the intereſts of thoſe, who fill a certain ſpace in the public eye; but the moment, that from overſight or imprudence they render themſelves the themes of popular diſcontent, he infallibly abandons them. Why not? what buſineſs has he to lend his ſupport to men, who do not know how to ſupport and take care of themſelves? He was tenderly attached to a ſtateſman, celebrated for the magic of his addreſs; to a citizen, bold in the cauſe of the public; to a woman of quality, (*une ducheſſe*) of great ſenſibility and underſtanding; to a magiſtrate, who had ſucceſsfully recommended himſelf to popular applauſe. When the miniſter was diſgraced, the citizen perſecuted, the woman of quality deſerted, and the magiſtrate forgotten, Antenor excuſed himſelf from the trouble of vindicating their reputation.

His conduct in politics is like his conduct in friendſhip. Two pamphlets more remarkable for animation than for ſtrength of reaſoning, more diſtinguiſhed by ingenuity of reſearch than by ſolidity of principle, appeared under his name in the laſt winter, and taught the public to expect in Antenor a zealous defender of the doctrines of liberty and the cauſe of the people. He found, that theſe principles were not acceptable to his own order. He accordingly retracted his momentary error, and gave the ſtamp of publicity to his retractation. Obſerve however, that this was at a criſis, when the firmneſs of the nobles' houſe of aſſembly ſeemed to prepare for them the victory. Now, that the commons are enabled to diſpute this victory, it is more than probable, that Antenor will refer to his pamphlets, and declare that they are the faithful

faithful depoſitaries of his political creed. And why not deſert the ariſtocracy? *What buſineſs has Antenor to lend his ſupport to men, who do not know how to ſupport and take care of themſelves?*

At what rate are we to eſtimate the abilities of Antenor? He has nothing about him very characteriſtic, but many things above the common rate, a moderate degree of penetration, a verbiage of eloquence, which, though ſufficiently faulty, is yet better than his compoſition and his ſtyle. To a true judge there is a very ſenſible difference between a heated imagination and a heart-felt courage; between the reſtleſſneſs of ambition and the vigour of the ſoul; between an incapacity of retention and that fulneſs of the mind which muſt communicate itſelf; between common-place declamation againſt courts and an inbred averſion to the life of a courtier. Grant me this, and every one of my diſtinctions is to the diſadvantage of Antenor.

To do him perfect juſtice it would be neceſſary to weigh one's words with ſingular accuracy. Few men are more capable of ſerving their party, but you muſt by no means depend upon it that he will ſerve it to-morrow. He diſplays courage, he expreſſes zeal, he ſtates a project; and in all this for the preſent he is very ſincere: but with equal ſincerity he will infallibly deſtroy all this hereafter It is not ſo much that he is a weak man; it is not that he is inconſiſtent. How then do we account for it? Antenor ſees but to a certain extent at a ſingle view; he enters with eagerneſs into the truth that he ſees: he grows animated and warm; preſently circumſtances change, the ſcene is altered; other objects preſent themſelves to his view; diſqui-

ſition

ſition enlarges his ideas and dignifies his way of conſidering objects. His imagination then grows warmer than before; it diſtends and becomes ungovernable; it overthrows every thing he had before erected, and hurries him away to ſomething diametrically oppoſite. The love of admiration is his ruling paſſion; and he forgets, that contradictions ruin a man in the public opinion; that they would ſmother and annihilate the moſt ſhining talents; and that therefore by a ſtill ſtronger reaſon——

But in the party to which Antenor attaches himſelf, that is, for juſt as long as he adopts it, he will ſpeak with warmth, he will impreſs upon his auditors the dignity of truth, he will give to their operations activity and exertion; he will keep them, as it were, in a continued ſucceſſion of debating, digeſting, deciding. I know how eaſy it is to turn this talent into ridicule; but I alſo know, that in all numerous aſſemblies, which continually tend towards inaction, a few of theſe men, that argue, that preſs, that put the maſs into motion, are indiſpenſably neceſſary.

Antenor is capable of the greateſt ſacrifices; but then, he muſt have had the merit of being the firſt to think of them; and the party that ſubmits to the ſacrifice muſt conſtitute a minority.

Upon common occaſions he has energy and fortitude; but he is beſide himſelf, when he turns his eye upon the court, when he ſees ſo many titled idiots loaded with the gifts of fortune and the favour of their prince, while he, a patriot, an author, a man of eloquence and mind, can play no part but in his own province,

vince, and there ſeldom fills more than a ſecondary character.

Antenor intended to prop himſelf upon one of the columns of the ſtate * ; but, as that column begins to totter, he has purſued a ſurer path to the acquiſition of glory. He foreſees the cataſtrophe of miniſterial power, and, conſiſtent with his well-known principle, he withdraws in time.

* Probably Mr. Necker.

MICUS.

MICUS.

(Count de Cuſtines.)

MICUS is one of thoſe perſonages, who miſtake what they could have done, or what they ought to have done, for actual performance; who go from place to place, telling their dreams, as if they were ſo many realities, and deſcribing the ſchemes they have formed, as if they were ſo many finiſhed atchievements. He has viſited America, Germany, England, Sweden, Denmark and Ruſſia, in the ſame ſpirit as one reads their names in a map, uninſtructed by the opportunities he has poſſeſſed, unamuſed by the objects he has beheld. His heart is placed in the ſeat of the brain; his brain is always heated and enthuſiaſtic. In ſpeculation he is a ſage, a kind of baſtard philoſopher; but bring him to the touchſtone of ſagacity, and his philoſophy turns into air.

Micus has much to ſay for himſelf, which implies multiplicity of ideas and facility of expreſſion. He is incapable of reflection, and ſtill more incapable of converſation; but he has that boldneſs, which impoſes upon fools, nay, impoſes upon men of ſenſe; for they grow tired of the perpetual din, and had rather complaiſantly approve, than contend with the ſtorm.

Micus deſires to be an inventor and is only an humoriſt; to be ſevere and is only impertinent; he would willingly be taken for a malcontent and is only extravagant: a good ſoldier,

dier, an indifferent general, and a man of genius, as far as that quality can conſiſt with vain-glory, boaſting and the continual uſe of hyperbolical expreſſions.

Ought we to expect of a military man the information, that is requiſite in him that would lay the foundation of a good conſtitution? Shall we fly to tents and martial fields, to enquire out the principles of perſonal liberty? Can a ſoldier contribute to the wiſdom of our legiſlation? As there is ſcarcely any thing that does not demand reform, it were to be deſired, that every member of the national aſſembly ſhould be a man of talents. One of the wiſeſt objects we can propoſe to ourſelves, is, to ſow, as it were, the ſeeds of future intellect, of minds, that may improve the ſketch which we ſhall delineate, that may conſolidate the edifice that will totter to its baſe, and add what will infallibly be deficient in a great work undertaken with precipitation.

Micus has that principle of animal fortitude, which upon a thouſand occaſions is of the moſt eſſential uſe. It is ſcarcely to be imagined, that, in a long train of events that is now preparing, this ardour will not find its place. Can it be believed, that all the provinces, blindly obedient to the oracles of their own repreſentatives, will receive the new code in ſilence? Some will demand modifications; others will reject it altogether. But let us leave this great ſecret in the obſcurity that involves it; the period haſtens, in which we ſhall not fail to be acquainted with it. It may be, the tutelary angel of France watches over her felicity in this intereſting and critical moment.

LANOSE

LANOSE.

(Viſcount de Noailles.)

LANOSE diſplays a firmneſs, not commonly ſeen in his family. Conſtant in their principles, faithfully adhering to the court and the church, they love better the king that is the father of his nobility, than the king that is the father of his people. A deſerter of the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem, a willing convert to the principles that the times impoſe, Lanoſe has courageouſly declared himſelf in favour of the oppreſſed multitude, and profeſſed a doctrine altogether unknown to his anceſtors.

Lanoſe has a ſoul of fire, not a heated underſtanding. This diſtinction is not commonly attended to; though the former is pregnant with ſublime and heroic action, while the other engenders nothing but diſputes. Accordingly, Lanoſe is eloquent without intending to be ſo. His ideas flow from an ardent diſpoſition, agitated at once with hope and fear; inſpired with the perception of wrong and the deſire of right; prompted by diſpleaſure to ſee queſtions miſtated and miſunderſtood, and by ability to illuminate and to guide.

Men of animation, full of their ſubject, are continually guilty of exaggeration, and exceed the ſtrict bounds of propriety and truth. It is without doubt an error, but it is alſo the purchaſe-money, that we pay for the qualities of men fit to conduct a revolution; they paſs the goal; they return upon their ſteps, and they ſtop at the true point, but a little later than they ſhould

ſhould have done. Experience is a plant of tardy growth, and it is from thence only that we imbibe a true education. Ability makes us enterpriſing; courage enables us to ſurmount difficulties; the love of glory gives us conſtancy and perſeverance; but experience alone renders our meaſures true, and gives us certainty and ſatisfaction in all our operations. In the midſt of the preſent confuſions, which are to many a ſource of calamity and to many a ſource of guilt, it is not to be expected that Lanoſe, who paſſes at once from the duſt of the martial field to the roſtrum of political debate, can have formed to himſelf two characters; the one full of ardour, the depoſitary and medium of authority and ever ready to ſtrike; and the other prudent, deliberate, apprehenſive of co-operating with the abuſes of power, and the conſtant adverſary of mandates that ſhed the blood of mankind. Can we then be aſtoniſhed, if we find in Lanoſe, in the midſt of debate, a bold, deciſive and peremptory tone, a tinge, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, of the military man and the camp.

Lanoſe ſtripped himſelf of this defect upon the day of election. Rank and ſituation called upon him to preſide in the aſſembly; but he felt, that the choice of the people only, was entitled to place him in the chair. He reſigned a claim, that cuſtom authoriſed, but that reaſon abjured. I pretend not to give this noble and unaffected procedure for more than it is worth; but I am willing to remark, that every thing ſpeaks to us in favour of him, who ſeizes the ſlighteſt occaſions to execute what he recommends; and who willingly exchanges a theory, that is eaſily delineated,

delineated, for a practice, which it infallibly requires effort to adopt.

Eaſily might I enlarge to a greater extent the praiſes, which are perhaps juſtly due to Lanoſe; but we diſpenſe ourſelves from applauding the men, who ſeize, as a right, upon the homage we have prepared, and whoſe vanity always outruns the tribute of mankind. Modeſty in young people of a certain ſtamp is at preſent a mere *ens rationis*, a ſource of blame, not an argument of worth. But it muſt be confeſſed that Lanoſe is in the extremity of the faſhion; his arrogance ſurpaſſes common bounds. How would this quality ſhrink to nothing among us, if we thought more of what we wanted, than of what we had attained; if we were perſuaded, that it was one of the effects of profound knowledge, to diſſipate the clouds of pride, and to clear the mental horizon from the exaggerations of vanity?

A man of mere common underſtanding can ſcarcely be expected to be modeſt; but how eaſy is this quality to a man, that riſes above the ordinary level; and how wiſe in the aſſumption of it, if we have that in us which unavoidably humbles the reſt of mankind?

FUL-

FULBERT.

(Chevalier de Boufflers, one of the Forty Members of the French Academy.)

IT is not a little unfortunate for a man to have gained great ſucceſs with ſlender means, to have obtained a reputation, with which he knows not what to do, becauſe he is unable to ſupport it. Fulbert would have been the happieſt of mankind, if he could have remained ſtationary at the age of twenty-five. Deſcriptions pictureſque and voluptuous, well turned couplets, a knack of verſifying, and all the countleſs train of nothings, the uſual rattles and hobby-horſes of an adoleſcence that is divided between the amuſements of fiction, ſecure to their poſſeſſor a degree of celebrity. But, when the ſeaſon of trifles is paſſed, when reaſon comes to vindicate her claims, ſhe rejects or ſhe bluſhes for ſucceſſes, that are due to ſo contemptible cauſes. Such has been the ſad experience of Fulbert. He has been willing to ſubſtitute truth in the place of fable, thought in the room of deſcription, and reaſon and ſcience as the ſucceſſors of rhyme. What his aſtoniſhment, when he found, that the habits of frivolity and amuſement had ſhrunk up and withered the genuine powers of his underſtanding? Thus circumſtanced, there was no room for him in France. He croſſed the Atlantic, to ſeek the ſemblance of labour, and rather to draw a veil over an unprofitable youth, than to employ his leiſure for the good of the ſtate. We deceive others,

others, but are rarely ſucceſsful in concealing the truth from ourſelves. From this period Fulbert has become moroſe. He has ceaſed to be what he was before, without becoming what he ought to be. Contemplating with regret the part that he might have played, obſerving with bitterneſs the advancement of rivals that he might have outſtripped, he became averſe to the ſeat of his natural reſidence. He has inliſted in the party of the ariſtocracy; the nobility have appeared to him as ſo many columns of the ſtate, and he has conceived, that that man's mind muſt be completely perverted, who could think of beſtowing any direct and legitimate power upon the third eſtate. Hence the ſecret cabals that have been held under the roof of Mitis*; the weekly conferences at the houſe of a certain great man; the clandeſtine publications, the object of which has been to confirm the fickle and the wavering, who ſeemed half inclined to ſuſpect the truth of the doctrine, that the many were made to be ſubject to the few. The reputation and the cauſe of theſe writers are ſinking together at the unerring tribunal of public opinion.

Fulbert has a great deal of what they call wit, and ſpeaks like a man, that is willing none of it ſhould be loſt. Naturally of a grave diſpoſition he wiſhes to appear gay; naturally frivolous, he aſſumes an air of importance; good humoured, he wiſhes to be thought ſatirical; indolent, he aſſumes the air of a deep ſtudent. He is upon the watch for trivial ſucceſſes, and would be thought to deſpiſe them.

* Duke de Nivernois.

No

No ſooner had he gained a ſeat in the academy, than he made a jeſt of academical honours. Three weeks he employed upon a heavy declamation, and immediately after abandoned it to criticiſm, which in its turn has conſigned it to oblivion.

What ſhall be expected from a mind of this ſtamp? A ſong or a madrigal? He has deſerted the muſe. Political principles and views? Upon this ſubject his mind is darkened with ariſtocratical prejudice. Diſquiſition and philoſophical diſcovery? Your wits conſider every thing as loſt time, that tends not to increaſe the circle of their admirers; and unfortunately works of genuine utility do not produce their effect but by inſenſible degrees.

Fulbert was born fourſcore years too late. In the time of Fontenelle, La Motte and Greſſet, he would have made a diſtinguiſhed figure upon the French Parnaſſus. But there is a diſtance almoſt immeaſurable, from the age of fiction and wit to the age in which we live. Let us ſuppoſe Mitis firſt miniſter, Fulbert in the war department, Succulet in the marine, and Pameza ſecretary for foreign affairs: what citizen would ſleep in his bed? Theſe perſons however, who upon the ſuppoſition I have made preſent us with ſo ridiculous an aſſemblage, are in the poſſeſſion of ſome reputation, and are juſtly entitled to the praiſe of imagination and wit. But what is wit, what is poetical invention, what is correctneſs of compoſition, or the art of making agreeable entertainments, unleſs accompanied and illuſtrated with ſomething better? Men avoid at a certain age the dreſſing themſelves in gay and lively colours, the

the engaging in dancing and other juvenile amuſements; and yet it is unqueſtionable, that in France we prolong the period of frivolity, far beyond the bounds of indulgent nature, and the leſſons of true decorum:

The patriarch, unknowing how his years to grace,
Concludes with joyleſs revelry his race *.

May it not be true, that the total neglect of reflection and reaſon in our earlier years, neceſſarily introduces a premature imbecility, and approaches the moral man to the natural ſituation of thoſe imperfect beings, of whom Italy abſurdly boaſts, and who conſecrate their ignominious exiſtence to the utterance of ſounds, melodious but ſterile?

Ill betide the man, whom we never quote but for his bon-mots! What are our wits and our poets, compared with Voltaire? What would Voltaire himſelf have been, if he had not given to his age that philoſophical impulſe, the firſt cauſe of the love of liberty, which now animates the nation; of that fearleſs hardihood of thinking, which in a few years has advanced the whole people of France to a height, beyond the moſt ſanguine hopes that could have been entertained?

If however we are contented to confine ourſelves to what is called wit, it muſt be confeſſed, that few perſons have better pretenſions than Fulbert. It is eaſy to be more virtuous, more amiable, more amuſing, more intereſting: but it is rare to utter in one day a greater num-

* Qui n'a pas le gout de ſon âge,
De ſon âge a tout le malheur.

ber

ber of happy expreſſions. The graces, that accompany them, are far from putting the change upon us; it is wit, naked, laboured and dry, but often original, and ſometimes ſtriking.

LUDVAL.

(M. Duval d'Eprémeſnil, Counſellor in the Parliament of Paris.)

LUDVAL has ſtarted; he has engaged himſelf to the public to run in a conſpicuous career; if he draw back, his ſplendid hopes will terminate in an abortion; if he go on, he will aſſemble a crowd of ſpectators, and render the public a witneſs to his fall. Why ſhould we preſage it? Becauſe Ludval is raiſing an edifice, and has no foundation to ſupport it. It is not enough, to thruſt oneſelf forward, to put on a bold face, to poſſeſs rather the habit than the talent of ſpeaking, to have that ſort of heated conception which communicates itſelf to the ſpectators. There is wanting, the capacity to apprehend a ſyſtem in all its parts; an inexhauſtible fertility to enable us to combat the difficulties, which always ariſe from the ſhock of opinions; a profound knowlege of men and of intereſts, of the rights of ſociety, and the extent to which authority can be carried.

In the privileged order, which has, I know not why, admitted Ludval as one of its members, it has commonly been obſerved: "We "know what to do with him. We make him "ſay violent and extraordinary things, which "we can afterwards, either adopt as a princi-"ple, or diſavow as an extravagance. The "moſt eſſential uſe may be derived from men, "who have accuſtomed the public to falſe rea-"ſoning and inconſiſtency."

It

It is reported, that Ludval has ſworn to ſupport, not only his own corps, but with it all the parliaments of the kingdom. How will he extricate himſelf from theſe engagements? Let the preſent ſcene terminate as it will, it is hardly to be imagined that the magiſtrates will ever hereafter be permitted to mix in ſtate affairs; there will no longer be any thing but the nation and the king, the king and the nation.

Ludval would be thought to have every thing, to have penetrated into every thing, to know every thing. There is no diſeaſe for which he cannot find out a remedy; there is no argument, that he cannot refute; there is no difficulty, that he cannot annihilate. Admitting that he has all theſe talents in perfection, I doubt whether they be abſolutely neceſſary. I can hardly believe, that the advocate-general Talon, that the preſident Molé, or the chancellor D'Agueſſeau picqued themſelves upon the poſſeſſion of this ſort of merit.

It was reſerved for the preſent age to produce this ſpecies of univerſal men, who fairly advance their pretenſions, to dictate to the corps of which they are members, to preſide in the court of opinion, and to reign over the underſtandings of mankind. On what do they found their lofty and alarming pretenſions? Where are the proofs of their aſtoniſhing capacity? Where are the pledges of ability that they have depoſited in the face of mankind? What titles for inſtance can Ludval exhibit? Are they thoſe vehement declamations, where an uncurbed imagination ſeems to ſink under its own inanity? Are they the pious farces he has played in the *Rue Plâtriere*, where, prieſt of a new re-

ligion, reaſon and truth were the victims that he ſacrificed to his new divinity. Are they his incendiary harangues againſt adminiſtration, at a period, when all the world was in arms againſt government, and when the magiſtrates alone perhaps were inexcuſable in publicly appearing to ſhare in the juſt diſcontent of the nation; ſince law ought ever to be at hand to ſuppreſs the exceſſes even of laudable zeal? Were they the ſcandalous ſcenes he exhibited in the full aſſembly of parliament; or his ſchool-boy flight; or that pertinacious reſiſtance, which reduced the executive power to the dilemma, either of precipitately reſigning its eſtabliſhed authority, or of exerting that authority with a dangerous eclat? Were they the intrigues, that preceded and accompanied the election; or the ſudden formation of a club, which reſembled rather a troop of dark conſpirators, than an aſſembly of patriots, diſcuſſing the lawful means of ſecuring their liberties?

Behold what remains of certain perſonages, when you anatomiſe their conduct, and when you are willing to give yourſelf reaſons for eſteeming or deſpiſing them! How immenſe the difference between earning the applauſe of mankind and taking it by ſurpriſe; between diſcuſſion and declamation; between tried fortitude and a heated brain; between a conſummate talent and a ſuperficial faculty; between the love of one's country and the love of admiration! It is the everlaſting miſtake of one of theſe things for the other, that occaſions our errors, that inſpires wrong judgment and improper confidence.

I take

I take no notice of the inſupportable vanity, which, if Ludval poſſeſſed the talents he wants, would make his talents deteſtable; and which makes the poor ſeemings he diſplays an eternal ſource of laughter and contempt. I take no notice of the abſurdities that accompanied him, from his retreat in Provence to the tumultuous ſcenes of Lyons, and from Lyons to Paris. I take no notice of that verſatility of ſentiment, which would give him to the court, if the court could perſuade itſelf to purchaſe his abilities at the rate that he has fixed upon them. All this is trite and threadbare, has been ſaid over and over again, and is attended with uncommon probabilities.

Put him in what light you will, Ludval can be of no uſe in the national aſſembly. Conſidered in various reſpects, he may be dangerous. While we deny him the powers of diſcuſſion and reaſoning, we do not diſpute, that he poſſeſſes the knack of public ſpeaking, and that vehemence, the influence of which is exerted with ſucceſs over the minds of men. But theſe qualities are almoſt conſtantly injurious; becauſe fancy diſdains to take advice of moderation, and vanity becomes intoxicated with a momentary ſucceſs.

EUXINUS.

EUXINUS.

(*M. Dupont, Counſellor in the Parliament of Paris*)

A Habit of reflecting, real ſcience, patriotic views, an honeſt heart, a tried diſintereſtedneſs; and with all this an incomplete reputation. What can be the cauſe of this extraordinary phenomenon? Is it, that their poſſeſſor leans too much to the ſpirit of ſyſtem? Is it, that he is deficient in the knowledge of mankind? Is it, that he is overborne and thruſt aſide by the power of circumſtances? I know not. But were it not that I always miſtruſt the judgment of the multitude, I ſhould incline to the ſpirit of ſyſtem.

This ſpirit, which many people imagine to be incompatible with ſevere reaſon, is however the reſult of extraordinary genius, or at leaſt of that active imagination, which is formed to ſeek with ſucceſs the remedy of abuſes. Grant that we buy this advantage at the price of a few errors: is there any ſublunary advantage pure and unmixed? Has the world exhibited a talent abſolutely perfect?

Euxinus is entitled to conſiderable eſteem, ſince he is induſtrious, of fertile invention, and poſſeſſed of all that partial and inferior knowledge, which is one of the great inſtruments of a ſtateſman, and which, without abſolutely conſtituting a great man, employs one half of his induſtry and his life.

Another

Another talent, that is but little noticed in the world, is the habit of doing buſineſs with regularity and eaſe. In a government of great extent form exiſts every where; and he, who is imperfectly acquainted with it, throws every thing into confuſion; confuſion, that is without doubt the worſt of evils, ſince, if we could be reduced to ſo cruel a dilemma, it would be better to have depredation with regularity, than probity without it.

It cannot be denied, that Euxinus poſſeſſes conſiderable qualifications; but there is an evident diſtance between theſe qualifications and the merit that makes a ſtateſman. This word preſents to the mind the idea of a vaſt genius, improved by experience, capable of embracing the maſs of ſocial intereſts, and of perceiving how to maintain true harmony among the individuals of which ſociety is compoſed. It preſents an extent of information, which may give ſubſtance and union to the different operations of government, without partially eſpouſing any particular ſide; juſt as Colbert, for inſtance, thought of nothing but manufactures, or as the economiſts have paid an excluſive attention to agriculture.

It preſents the talent of bringing all this information into act, perſpicuity, method, the conſtant purſuit of certain principles, indulgence for thoſe who are engaged in executing our plans, the art of eſtimating truly the inſtruments we employ, the qualities, which make men pardon to him that commands, that empire, which thoſe who obey never yield but with regret.

It

It preſents a fortitude, capable of reſiſting the efforts of men, who conſpire againſt their own felicity. Difficulties ſtart up on every ſide againſt him, who is willing to ſerve his ſpecies; a part of his energies muſt be called off from meditation, to be employed in the defence of principles, the moſt pure and incontrovertible.

I intreat Euxinus to forgive me. There is ſomething malicious in ſetting his name by the ſide of the portrait I have drawn. Meanwhile it is thus only that we can create juſt ideas and excite emulation. Should we perſevere in believing that we are great men, the evil is without a remedy. It is only by perfectly knowing what we are, that we ſhall ever become what we ought to be.

GARBES.

G A R B E S.

(*Mr. Bergaſſe, Advocate.*)

GARBES preſents us with a ſingular aſſemblage of compoſure and cowardice, of eloquence and garrulity, of virtuous fortitude and vicious inconſtancy, of honeſt pride and ſervile meanneſs. He profeſſes vanity, and boaſts of it, as another would of his modeſty. Eagerneſs and violence are the natural ſtate of his mind. Magnetiſm, cuckuldom and his country equally excite the enthuſiaſm of his ſoul. His failing is, to covet the adoration of the women, and to neglect the men. Not that his object is abſolutely their favours; but that he loves goſſipping and flattery. Oh! he is abſolutely beſide himſelf, if an old woman wears his miniature in her bracelet, or ſwoons with delight at the reading of his charming harangues, or is in extacy at the ſight of his bald and venerable countenance. His failing is alſo to deſire to be thought rich, in order that the independence of his ſituation may add to the reſpect he exacts. Follow this maniac through all his ravings, and you will find that he is frequently within a hair's breadth of the truth. In general it is eagerneſs only, that detracts from the ſoundneſs of our judgment; but in Garbes want of judgment is a natural defect. We ſee it in his mode of explaining himſelf, and in the choice of his ſubjects. A man of true diſcretion will never make a ſerious occupation of the viſions of magnetiſm, will never introduce

ſtate affairs into the examination of a quarrel between huſband and wife, will never make a ſolemn ſermon upon adultery, becauſe the wife of a tradeſman had too inflammable a conſtitution. Want of judgment reduces the man of genius into nothing. Garbes pleads, and is no advocate; he writes upon politics, and is neither employed, nor withes to be be ſo. He amplifies, he exaggerates, he declaims, but never exerts that luminous reaſon, which reflects its rays on all that ſurrounds it. "He "has great abilities," ſay certain enthuſiaſts. What is an ability that never produced any effect? What is an honeſt and moral eloquence, that gains ſome tranſient applauſe for its poſſeſſor, but that never gained the cauſe of one man in favour of whom it was employed? Fame, that is founded upon uſurpation, laſts only for a moment.

"Ought we not to admire his generous devotion for the intereſts of his friend?" Admit it? but friendſhip is not a great virtue, unleſs it fix upon an object worthy of its noble and generous exertions. The choice in many inſtances deſtroys the charm. A good ſort of man, weak, narrow, irreſolute, without conſiſtency and without talents, cannot become the friend of a man, who advances his claims to general conſideration. We are bound to ſerve all the world, and to love nothing, but merit enlightened by the dictates of genius. Thoſe, who have alledged, that Garbes ſeized the occaſion of making himſelf known, have palliated indeed the impropriety of his choice, but, to excuſe his heart, have faſtened no honourable imputation on his underſtanding.

An

An anxiety to become talked of is almoſt always the mark of moderate abilities. It argues a ſecret feeling, that one might eaſily ſink into obſcurity and be conſigned to oblivion. The man who is impelled by it, has no conſciouſneſs of inbred force, and does not feel that ſuperiority, which enſlaves the ſuffrages of mankind, and obliges fame to publiſh his greatneſs with her thouſand trumpets. The man who is impelled by it, cannot go on without hearing the murmur of his own reputation, and wants ſome foreign excitement to the purſuit of rectitude. Perhaps I put too ſevere a conſtruction upon this deſire of ſhining, which is commonly known by the more ſonorous epithet of the love of glory; but I can ſcarcely figure it to myſelf as united to talents of the firſt order.

Since Garbes entered the hall of the ſtates-general, he has wrapped himſelf in the cloak of a modeſt ſilence. Shall we attribute this to his loſs of victory in a certain inſtance? Shall we attribute it to that prudence, which tells a man to wait, till events have decided upon the buſineſs, before he interferes with them? I cannot poſitively ſay. But as prudence is not the favourite virtue of elevated ſouls, we might be excuſed, if we ſuſpected in Garbes an intention to puniſh his country for their unanimous applauſe of a deciſion, which, according to Garbes, "is odious to the heavens, and diſhonourable to the earth," and which, according to right reaſon, was dictated by the tenour of thoſe very facts, that Garbes himſelf took the pains to relate.

TERGAT.

TERGAT.

(Mr. Target, Advocate, one of the Forty Members of the French Academy.)

THERE was a time, when it was a conſiderable thing to be a celebrated advocate, whether the perſon ſo denominated were privately employed in reconciling diſputes that were foſtered by the demon of chicane, or that he diſplayed the pomp and luſtre of eloquence, or were the dignified organ and interpreter of the law. The profeſſion is now become ſubaltern, and he, who feels the vigour of ability, can ſcarcely refrain from the career of the ſtateſman. Tergat appeared at the bar, and his pride was more than once gratified by finding the lawyers prepared to liſten to the dictates of his voice. The Academy was indeed leſs prompt in its homage *. But one feels a certain indifference for the laurels of Pindus, when one has already obtained the prize of eloquence. The clubs atoned for the rigours of the Louvre †; and not one of the open-mouthed auditors in the tragi-comic aſſemblies, where patriotiſm kindly lends its name to egotiſm and intrigue, but applauds with both his hands the inexhauſtible fecundity of the periodical orator. The elections ſeemed ready to leave ſo eminent a merit without recompence; and, apprehenſive

* M. Target was not elected a member of the French Academy till the year 1785, after having been ſeveral times an unſucceſsful candidate.

† Where the meetings of the accademy are held.

of

of the diſgrace, Tergat awakened their indifference, and animated their gratitude, by aſſiduouſly putting his name in all the liſts of candidates. But his officiouſneſs produced no greater effect than his merit; when a God, concealed in the political machine, acted without openly appearing, and of an elector converted him into a deputy. Tergat purſues the middle path recommended by Horace, which according to him is the laſt degree of wiſdom, and in the eſtimate of the true philoſopher is the extreme of imbecility. He propoſes a queſtion without having an opinion of his own; or he gives an opinion, and at the ſame time ſecures himſelf a retreat in caſe of the worſt. If the nobleſſe cannot complain of him, the third eſtate cannot applaud him. He quits one party, and only does not abandon the other. His ability ſerves as a maſk to the imbecility of his character, and furniſhes upon every occaſion a ready excuſe for the impropriety of his conduct. Do any of his proceedings appear tinctured with perfidy? "Such is," ſays he, "the unhappy condition of thoſe who devote themſelves for the public good. To ſerve mankind it is neceſſary to deceive them." Has he unfortunately ſuffered himſelf to be overcome by ill temper and paſſion? "It is no longer time," he exclaims, "to temporiſe and to qualify; our liberties are threatened on every ſide, and we muſt hazard all for their preſervation." Do men of more than ordinary penetration ſee through his ambiguous proceedings, and demonſtrate, that this ſyſtematical prudence tends more to benefit the fortune of the individual, than the intereſt of the whole? "True,"

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of the disgrace, Tergat awakened their indifference, and animated their gratitude, by assiduously putting his name in all the lists of candidates. But his officiousness produced no greater effect than his merit; when a God, concealed in the political machine, acted without openly appearing, and of an elector converted him into a deputy. Tergat pursues the middle path recommended by Horace, which according to him is the last degree of wisdom, and in the estimate of the true philosopher is the extreme of imbecility. He proposes a question without having an opinion of his own; or he gives an opinion, and at the same time secures himself a retreat in case of the worst. If the nobleſſe cannot complain of him, the third estate cannot applaud him. He quits one party, and only does not abandon the other. His ability serves as a mask to the imbecility of his character, and furnishes upon every occasion a ready excuse for the impropriety of his conduct. Do any of his proceedings appear tinctured with perfidy? "Such is," says he, "the unhappy condition of those who devote themselves for the public good. To serve mankind it is necessary to deceive them." Has he unfortunately suffered himself to be overcome by ill temper and passion? "It is no longer time," he exclaims, "to temporise and to qualify; our liberties are threatened on every side, and we must hazard all for their preservation." Do men of more than ordinary penetration see through his ambiguous proceedings, and demonstrate, that this systematical prudence tends more to benefit the fortune of the individual, than the interest of the whole? "True,"

" True" cries he, " there are men enough " ready to ſcatter the flames of diſcord; it is " neceſſary, that at leaſt a few of the friends of " reaſon ſhould be upon their guard to ſtop the " conflagration." Thus, whether the ſea rages with the violence of the winds, or every thing is tranquil and calm, his bark equally arrives at the port. He aſſiſts the parliament and the miniſter, the friends of liberty and the zealots of the ariſtocracy. He drew up the reſolution in favour of the Journal of the Count de Mirabeau, and a motion for the pretended conciliatory plan of M. Necker *; and, oſcillating thus from one ſide to the other, he is the orator of both parties and truſted by neither. My portrait of him, it will be ſaid, " conſiſts of " antitheſes;" for that very reaſon it reſembles Tergat. How is it poſſible to define a paradox without appearing to contradict oneſelf? " But Tergat", it will be added, " is a man of repu- " tation." True, he acquired it, when it was in the gift of the vulgar, and when to be frequently heard was a ſufficient qualification for it. But we are arrived at the fatal era, when the premature reputations of men are taken to pieces, and when public opinion withdraws from the ſtock, that, which will not ſtand the trial. The qualities, which the ſituation of public affiairs demands, are firm and poſitive principles; an eloquence, that never leans to tergiverſation; a frankneſs and ingenuity, that ſhall be more viſible in a man, than even his genius; a prudent abjuration of eſtabliſhed

* Intended to reconcile the claims of the nobility and the third eſtate, and addreſſed to the chambers 4 June.

prejudices,

prejudices, not a blind enthuſiaſm for whatever comes from the banks of the Thames. Compare Tergat with this ſtandard: his friends complain of it as unjuſt; impartial ſpectators ſay, that he cannot ſupport it.

We admit Tergat for a man of probity; but we beg leave to obſerve, that in this gallery we never have and never ſhall place probity in the liſt of qualities entitled to our eulogium. We think it proper to ſuppoſe that all men poſſeſs it; and we acknowledge, that to us the word ſuggeſts no diſtinct idea, in an age, when probity is become compatible with a total indifference to morals; with the moſt undiſguiſed and odious ſelfiſhneſs; with a ſcepticiſm, that is perhaps worſe than irreligion, ſince the former may degenerate into a ſyſtem, and the latter is at worſt but an error of the underſtanding; with the moſt unbounded avarice, which ſeeks its gratification in intrigue, and indifferently employs the leaſt reſpectable means.

We admit Tergat for a man of wit; but we reckon wit as a very trivial advantage, ſince it falls to the lot of ſuch a multitude of men, and appears to prevent ſo few miſtakes; and ſince for the preſent at leaſt it anſwers no other purpoſe than to give celebrity to errors, and to maintain thoſe, who imagine they poſſeſs it, in pertinaciouſneſs and obſtinacy.

We admit Tergat for a great advocate, for a ſplendid orator, for an accompliſhed academician; but as a ſtateſman, he is dangerous or uſeleſs: dangerous, if men perſiſt in overlooking his fluctuations; uſeleſs, if they become a ſubject of general detection.

BALBUS.

B A L B U S.

(*Mr. Bernard.*)

BALBUS has all the fire and preſumptuouſneſs of ability. He has made one lucky ſtep, and his ſucceſs has intoxicated him. How can he doubt, that the applauſe he has received, is the emanation of a feeling heart that he has melted, or a ſound underſtanding that he has captivated? It is not till after repeated experiments, that we learn to ſet a due value upon tranſient reputation.

Balbus, animated with the love of his country, imagining that every thing is practicable that is barely poſſible, and that to deſire excellence is the infallible way to produce it—Balbus, I ſay, gives himſelf up to a thouſand charming illuſions, and feeds himſelf with the hope of a new political creation. He expreſſes himſelf with fervour, becauſe he is penetrated with his ſubject; he has the eloquence of his age, which gathers ſtrength from the want of experience. He, that foreſees no difficulties, and apprehends no obſtacles, is much more vehement, than a man accuſtomed to obſerve the rocks and quickſands of human affairs, and who knows with how much vehemence men frequently oppoſe their own felicity.

There is a period of human life, when we eaſily perſuade ourſelves, that the empire of genius over the human race is altogether invincible, and that the united force of talents and zeal

zeal ought to look down with contempt on every ſort of reſiſtance. Hence the deſign to ſet prejudice at defiance, to convey the language of truth to the foot of the throne, to extricate the people for ever from ſlavery, and to render the taxes effectual and productive. Theſe brilliant ideas cauſe the moſt violent fermentation in a heated fancy, while the man grows cool by inſenſible degrees, when he becomes acquainted with the various cabals, that are formed by the paſſions in favour of eſtabliſhed abuſe.

This firſt meeting of the ſtates-general will be particularly uſeful, to make the nation acquainted with the men ſhe may one day employ. We find ſuch a member arrived at the perfection of which he is capable; another qualified for conſiderable improvement; a third anxious, not for ſcience, but applauſe; and a fourth ever upon the watch to take advantage of circumſtances, profeſſing himſelf the humble ſervant of every party and believed by none.

Balbus has not entered into all the accuracy of reflection. He is anxious to become a theme of public obſervation. The time, that it is not poſſible to ſpend in haranguing, he employs in compoſition. The occaſions of public ſpeaking he ſeizes with that ambitious imprudence, which allows him no time to conſider how deſirable it is, that he ſhould make himſelf longed for and expected. His eloquence, prodigal in words, in hyperbolical ſentences and enthuſiaſtical exclamations, is ſuch as might be expected from a youthful orator; but it leaves not thoſe impreſſions, that ſteal away the mind, and inſinuate by degrees the opinions and principles delivered in the general creed.

Balbus

Balbus affords the promiſe of great talents; but the preſent moment is not deſtined to gather the ample harveſt, unleſs indeed, outſtripping his age, their poſſeſſor ſhould proſtrate himſelf at the feet of experience, ſhould abjure his idle reſpect for the flouriſhes of eloquence, and conſecrate all his future labours at the ſhrine of that reaſon, whoſe mild and conſtant rays guide us with certainty to the region of truth. Such has been the conduct of the Engliſh Marcellus, and it is to this, that his country is indebted for all his utility. It is the conſummation of ability, to combine with the vivacity, that characteriſes our earlier years, the coolneſs and deliberation, that belong to a different period.

It ſeems to me, that modeſty is no ſuch difficult acquiſition. We may recollect, the many men that ſurpaſs us; that a ſtill greater number are our equals; and that a number greater than both are in a courſe of daily improvement, whoſe qualifications will be ſuperior to ours: they will find the path already beaten; we are obliged to diſentangle and to clear it. The arrogant man aſſerts his own value, becauſe he is afraid, that other men ſhould not perceive it. He forgets, that the world unwillingly affords praiſes that are demanded, and is prodigal of thoſe we ſeem to ſhun.

Balbus has a perfect perſuaſion of his own merit, and modeſty appears to him but another name for injuſtice. They are only fools, we are told, that are unable to judge of themſelves. Well then, I am contented you ſhould have the knowledge of your worth, but not that you ſhould ſhow it, and ſtill more that you ſhould not

not exaggerate it. For the reſt, Balbus has fallen into the error of the preſent age. The mode is to confound the limits of virtue and defect. Obſtinacy now bears the name of firmneſs; degeneracy is denominated ſpirit; the love of peace, imbecility; ambition, the mark of a comprehenſive mind; and, it ſeems, the true teſt of originality is poſitiveneſs; to anſwer all ſuch objections as we do not underſtand; to adopt for our own, works that we never read; to appear to be every thing, upon the reality of which we have not the ſlighteſt pretenſions. Such is the difference between the preſent period and the laſt years of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, when people were every thing and pretended to nothing.

TOMAN.

TOMAN.

(Mr. Malouet.)

THAT a man, the inhabitant of a land of intrigue, ſhould ſhow himſelf ſometimes under one face and ſometimes under another, that he ſhould deſire, to win upon the party whoſe cauſe he appears to eſpouſe, and not render himſelf odious to the party whoſe cauſe he deſerts, is a mode of conduct too common to excite our aſtoniſhment, and which in modern times has not always been unaccompanied with ſucceſs. But that at the preſent moment, when a hundred thouſand perſons obſerve with anxious eyes every thing that paſſes at Verſailles, a man of the moſt ordinary underſtanding ſhould conceive himſelf capable of playing a part that nobody will detect, is the height of arrogance or the height of folly.

Toman has been willing to aſſume various forms, and to appear in turn a ſtrenuous patriot, and the temperate reconciler of contending factions; the oracle of his order, and the organ of the miniſter. But this Proteus part, which was much beyond his ſtrength, ſoon became viſible to all; and Toman has found himſelf unhonoured in the national aſſembly, and untruſted by adminiſtration. By the firſt it was ſuſpected that he had ſold himſelf; by the laſt he was thought not worth the buying. Liable at once to the charge of duplicity and incapacity, that courage, which bears out genuine talents in the moment of emergency, has deſerted him;

him; and Toman has already nearly convinced his auditors, that nature intended him only for the ſituation of a ſubaltern.

To be of uſe to any party in a moment of confuſion, it is neceſſary, if we have not invention, that we ſhould at leaſt poſſeſs thoſe great powers of execution, which are all that frugal nature beſtows upon ſome of her favourites. But a vulgar readineſs of elocution, a moderate acquaintance with the routine of affairs, a little more fortitude and preſence of mind than falls to the lot of the herd, are the reſources of officious mediocrity, not the engines of a mind animated with the love of virtue. Toman never thought of employing his talents for the ſervice of the ſtates-general, but of employing the ſtates-general as a medium to diſplay his poor twilight of capacity. There are men, who appear animated and impaſſioned, and have at bottom the fineſt compoſure and coolneſs in the world; who talk in well-turned phraſes of the calamities of the ſtate; who abound in deſcriptions, but are unable to ſuggeſt remedies. Such is Toman. He is full of buſineſs and does nothing. The future fate of his country is little in his thoughts; the proceedings that will be adopted by the national aſſembly are the ſubject of his conſtant ſpeculation. He is incapable of comprehending the nature of the revolution. He neither foreſees its conſequences, nor can leſſen its defects, nor accelerate its period, provided it be in favour of the claſs of the people.

A year ago and Toman was nothing. What is a clerk in office in the midſt of twenty four millions of ſubjects? On a ſudden his ambition

riſes

riſes out of the circumſtances of his country; and, as if ambition were the child of capacity or the parent of it, he has advanced boldly into the middle of the ſcene. At firſt he maſqued his indeciſion behind the obſcurity of his reaſonings. Called upon to be explicit, he has feigned courage. Too vain to fall back into the crowd; too weak to form to himſelf a party, he has exhibited perpetual fluctuation; and, the moment his inſtability appeared, his harangues and his principles have become objects of equal indifference. He belongs to the claſs of thoſe, that we hear without liſtening to them; or to whom we liſten without being at the pains to anſwer them. Can Toman be ſo dull, as not to know, that, in whatever circumſtances we are placed, we muſt have a party and a ſyſtem of our own? To be the perpetual go-between of all parties, is to be nothing. It were better to be a conſpirator like Catiline, to be a rebel like Pugatſcheff, to be an uſurper like Cromwell, or a deſpot like Maupeou, than the timid organ of a crafty miniſter, whoſe object is to ſoothe the people, and not to redreſs them. Never can there be ſolid reconciliation between the hungry ſavage that devours us, and the ſubject of his deſtined prey; between the tyrant that deſtroys, and the ſlave that ſuffers. The combined nation does not poſſeſs a power too great, to reſiſt an uſurpation, that has continued for twelve centuries; that has often aſſumed the form of all-deſtroying deſpotiſm, and that has always been the fruitful mother of a thouſand abuſes. To become the champion of this uſurpation, is to betray the cauſe of the people, and to abuſe the temporary power they have

have confided to the miniſter. Toman is one of a very numerous ſet, who eaſily imbibe falſe principles, becauſe they can never ſee into the conſequences; who are anxious to obtain an employment they are unable to diſcharge; and, forget that the misfortune to be dreaded, is not to live for ever unknown, but to render oneſelf remarkable for abſurdity and weakneſs.

STEPHANO.

(Mr. Rabaud de Saint Etienne, one of the Miniſters of the French Proteſtant Church.)

STEPHANO writes in an agreeable and intereſting ſtyle; he ſpeaks with ſweetneſs and eaſe; but he is by no means a man of reflection, ſtill leſs a ſtateſman, and leaſt of all a philoſopher. He conceives nothing conſiderable or ſublime, but he makes his advantage of circumſtances as they occur. He has not become an author from the love of his country; he has merely written a book. With him the benefit of the ſtate and his own individual advantage go hand in hand; and, if no favourable revolution occur in government, he at leaſt hopes for a revolution in his private affairs. Does any one ſpeak of Stephano? We are already to join in his applauſe. Is it Stephano himſelf with whom we converſe? We ſecretly condemn the precipitation of our judgment.

Every curate longs for a benefice; every abbé wiſhes to be a biſhop; every biſhop deſires a cardinal's hat; and every cardinal aſpires to the papal chair. Do the principles of our ſect exclude us from theſe honours? We ſubſtitute the name of patriarch for that of a pope. For whom ſhall this office be created, if not for a zealous politician, who preaches againſt vaſſalage, juſt as he preached againſt popery?

Stephano is unlike the majority of his cloth, becauſe he loves toleration, as much as they love the principles of excluſion and monopoly; whether

whether it be that one of the religions is really leſs mild than the other, or that the religion of the minority has been ſo long humbled, as to aim at nothing but deliverance from its preſent degradation. Stephano, the pillar of proteſtantiſm, does not, like his haughty rivals, reſt his feet upon a footſtool of gold, and bear his head higher than the clouds.

In almoſt all bodies of men officious mediocrity gains more victories, than a decided genius. Genius, confident in its advantages, employs the tone of deſpotiſm and abuſes its rights; mediocrity confeſſes its own weakneſs, propoſes its ideas with modeſt heſitation, and ſeeks rather to earn than to arreſt the ſuffrages of mankind. In flattering the vanity of the great we make ourſelves acceptable to them, and in ſoothing the weakneſs of the ignorant vulgar we incline them to our opinion.

Stephano uſhered in his perſonal appearance by the publication of a book. This book tells us nothing that we did not know before. But it has collected in one point of view what was ſaid in books of diſquiſition and diſcovery. The mind of man, ever diſpoſed to indolence, is grateful to him, that ſpares it the labour of reſearch, and furniſhes a chain of popular reaſoning, that we may repeat with eclat to a ſet of auditors leſs enlightened than ourſelves.

Stephano has a portion of genius, though not of that ſort which is equal to the preſent ſituation of France. But the habit of commenting upon, and illuſtrating the ordinary topics of theology, wears out the underſtanding, conſumes our valuable time, and weakens the energies of the intellectual faculty. Why

ſhould we deny, that the national aſſembly has dwelt too much upon the minuteneſs of detail, and that the paſſion of diſplaying oratorical powers has ſpun out and procraſtinated the deciſion of principles? Of all the men who enter thoſe walls, Stephano would be moſt puzzled to exculpate himſelf from this accuſation.

The exiſtence which he deſires, is in the opinion of mankind. Firſt, a miſſionary, then an apoſtle, laſt of all a pontiff, he aſpires to another ſort of glory. We pretend not to aſſign the exact bounds of his ſucceſs. At any rate he has ſucceeded in reſcuing his name from the level of the obſcure multitude, and ranking it among thoſe of the acknowledged coadjutors of the preſent revolution; a revolution, reſpecting which no one can fix the preciſe period when it will take place, and few can even tell whether it will take place at all.

If we had not ſaid, that we are wholly ſilent on the article of probity, becauſe we take it for granted that it belongs to the whole aſſembly, we ſhould be bound in all juſtice to do homage to the probity of Stephano.

TIGEL-

TIGELLINUS.

(*Mr. Guillotin, a Phyſician.*)

TIGELLINUS does not waſte a thought upon the gaining voices in his favour, or the laying the foundation of a perſonal reputation. Convinced that petulance, oſtentation and an anxiety to ſhine are the characteriſtics of certain nations, he maintains a compoſure, that is inacceſſible to the weakneſs of his contemporaries. He proceeds with a conſtant and ſteady pace, without ever departing from the true principles of his conduct.

He ſets no value upon the ſounding periods of declamation, or the honour of moving certain queſtions, and above all he deſpiſes the art of ſtealing the notions of others. But, when an idea has for a long time been engendering in his mind, he announces, he explains it, he proves its utility and its worth. From that moment he cares not for the honour of having introduced it, and ſees with indifference his rivals ambitiouſly employed, to clothe it in the gaudineſs of their eloquence, and to adopt it as the fruit of their political lucubrations.

The talents of men are various. One man convinces us, ſubdues us and makes of his opinion an irreſiſtible law; another inſinuates, perſuades and is followed as the prudent guide, who ſhall lead us in ſafety through the difficulties of our undertaking; a third gains our ſuffrages by his paſſions and his ſenſibility, and unites the attractions of generoſity with the in-

vincibleneſs of reaſon; a fourth preſents us with the reſult of mature reflection, and fixes our wavering judgment by the confidence we derive from the integrity of his heart, and the depth of his underſtanding. Such is Tigellinus.

He is not ignorant, that the vulgar miſtake caution for timidity, moderation for imbecility, and circumſpection for inexperience. But he aſpires to be an uſeful citizen, and not a ſtateſman; he wiſhes to ſerve his country, and is totally indifferent to reputation. He leaves the public to their erroneous judgments; not that he does not regret them, but that he does not need to be animated by applauſe.

It is not always neceſſary to have produced a great work, in order to acquire the confidence of mankind. We ſubmit to the dictates of an enlightened underſtanding, as well as yield to the efforts of eloquence. How uncommon and how admirable are thoſe men, whoſe judgment is at once lucid and profound, whoſe merit is perſpicuous without being frigid, whoſe proceedings are cautious and yet not dilatory! I know not, whether we ought not to baniſh out of political ſubjects the deluſive attractions of rhetoric, and employ ſuch expreſſions only as ariſe out of the ſubject; ſo that our hearers may excluſively attend to the principles we deliver, not to the manner in which they are announced, or to the merit of their author.

But, if ſoundneſs of underſtanding be upon all occaſions ſo precious a gift, how much is its value enhanced, at a moment when every thing is painted in exaggerated colours, and when each man has a plan of his own to ſuggeſt; at a period,

a period, when mankind have not yet learned the limits of political truth, and look upon authority, as a ſort of ſpring, which may be bent or relaxed in either direction without danger! With grief we acknowledge, that a majority of the members of this auguſt aſſembly are diſpoſed to aſcribe too much or too little to the executive power. They believe, that to impoſe upon it a new reſtraint is to gain an additional victory; and they do not perceive, that the ſteps which they take to remove themſelves farther from deſpotiſm, lead to the horrors of anarchy; an evil more real and more inſupportable, than all that the ſeverity of a tyrant can impoſe.

Tigellinus does not imagine, that the regeneration of a people is the work of a few weeks only, that we ought to ſeize upon the occaſion when the minds of men are alive, and to take the nation as it were by ſtorm. He believes, that the more reflection ſhall have ripened our projects and regulations, the more confidence and reſpect will thoſe regulations acquire. Thus the ſtates-general were called together with precipitation, and the interval, that has elapſed, has been ſingly employed in endeavouring to remedy the conſequences of that precipitation.

CONCLUSION.

BUT what ſounds invade my ear! what diſaſtrous ſcene preſents itſelf to my eyes! my pencil drops from my trembling hands; I haſten to enquire the meaning of the tumult. Gracious heaven, what do I ſee! can I believe the teſtimony of my eyes! an adminiſtration, ſcattered at a blow; the mayor of a ſingle town, who ſeems ready to become every thing that were our ancient mayors of the palace *; an hundred thouſand burghers, changed at once into an armed force; a miniſter, exiled by thoſe who did not deſpiſe him, and recalled by thoſe who do not love him; a terrified court, upon whom the head of a proſcribed magiſtrate has worked all the effects that were fabled of the head of Meduſa; a palſied parliament, that does not ſhake off its ſlumber, but in order to commit an abſurdity which moſt of its members bluſh to recollect; a nobleman, commanding a city militia; an academician, at the head of the firſt city in the world; a king, round whom they ſing,

What guard ſo glorious as my childrens arms†!

* The mayors of the palace engroſſed the whole royal authority under the feeble kings that terminated the race of Clovis. Charles Martel was the real ſovereign of France; his ſon Pepin ſtripped the nominal king of the ſhadow of authority that remained; and his grandſon Charlemagne is perhaps the moſt conſiderable figure in the hiſtory of the middle ages. The mayor of Paris here alluded to is Mr. Bailly.

† Ou peut-on être mieux qu' au ſein de ſa famille?

at

at the very moment, when his children are demoliſhing his caſtles, and conducting in triumph the proviſions and the ordnance of which they have deſpoiled him; the brother of that king, a fugitive, and a price ſet upon his head; rumour herſelf, unable to recount the atrocious acts perpetrating in every part of France; the workſhops of the manufacturer deſerted; the ſyſtem of police annihilated; a comedian turned colonel in theſe ephemeron regiments, a bookſeller a major, a poet a captain; timid burghers converted into courageous citizens; the populace haſtening to a ſcene of blood as to an entertainment: ſuch is the ſtory of a ſingle week; ſuch is what our eyes have ſeen, but our hearts do not yet believe; or ſuch is what we believe, without being able to imagine how it has been accompliſhed.

Meanwhile, as ſoon as our ſenſes became tolerably calm, and the inquiſitive mind was deſirous to give itſelf an account of its own conceptions, we ſought after the cauſe of this revolution, of which all the annals of hiſtory do not afford a ſecond example. Is it not, that every kind of abuſe had at length reached its utmoſt limit? And how came they to be as innumerable as the ſands of the ocean? It was owing to the perpetual fluctuation of miniſter ſucceeding miniſter; it was owing to men's being called into office without any previous knowledge of their capacity. We imagined we ſaw ability in a financier, it was nothing but quackery: we imputed zeal, it was private ambition: we ſuppoſed a comprehenſive mind, the appearance aroſe from a ſeries of projects thrown together at hazard. It is this previous

knowledge

knowledge of men, the eſſential conſtituent of a great king, to which the writer of this volume is deſirous to contribute. It is this, that has determined us to form a Gallery of Portraits of the national aſſembly; that is, of about two hundred of thoſe members, who now play, or will hereafter play, a part in the ſcene.

It is perhaps difficult to make a nobler uſe of the liberty of the preſs. Let us be permitted to enumerate its advantages.

The executive power is in want of information as to who are the perſons to whom it ſhall confide its authority; an information the more neceſſary, as the reſponſibility of miniſters will make a part of the conſtitution, and as a miſtaken choice will riſk at once the honour of the maſter and the fate of the delegate.

The provinces are in want of information reſpecting the conduct of their deputies, thoſe eſpecially whoſe election has fallen upon ſtrangers recommended only by the reputation they had acquired. Whether the provinces ſhall originate their particular ſtates, or the national aſſembly ſhall adopt regulations for that purpoſe, they will equally want to be informed who they are that ought to obtain the ſuffrages of their country.

A very obvious reflection will point out to thoſe moſt adverſe to my plan the indiſpenſable neceſſity of purſuing it. France is now continually changing its opinion of the characters of men, diſavowing precipitate praiſe, retracting unjuſt ſeverity. Whence comes this? Becauſe we have not been able to examine the pretenſions of individuals to the general confidence; becauſe we have been urged on every

ſide

ſide by preconception and prejudice, and have yielded our compliance from inability to deſiſt.

It will not be thus with us hereafter; or at leaſt we ſhall have a ſort of mirror that we may conſult upon doubtful occaſions. Grant that the glaſs does not ſhew a faithful repreſentation; yet the portrait will ſcarcely be entirely deſtitute of truth. It is for the impartial public to judge; it is theirs to fix the reputation of men; it is theirs to give birth and ſubſtance to genuine ability. Accordingly we ſhould think only of the public; we ſhould ſeek to pleaſe only the public; from the public only we ſhould expect that celebrity which is due to talents, that immortality which attends upon genius.

NOTES.

(A) *But what a miniſter?* p. 35.]

DO not imagine, that I can beſtow the appellation of a man upon him who poſſeſſes only the ſordid cunning of baſely heſitating between two parties, equally flattering the monarch from whom he expected gain, and the people from whom he expected glory. Abortive in negociation, in literature and in government, he invoked all the miniſters of fame, in hopes of their aid to arrive at celebrity; though the lapſe of time inſinuated to him in no ambiguous language the oblivion that awaited his effuſions and his name. With a ſtudied appearance of candour, he perſecuted ſecretly and unintermittedly whoever refuſed to pay tribute to his queſtionable and uſeleſs talents. Under an exterior of decency he prepared certain receſſes for the purpoſe of voluptuouſneſs, and appointed to the prieſthood * †, Too timid to dare to inſult a man openly, he repeated, with all the cruelty and baſeneſs of malice, ſarcaſms, that originated in a malice cunningly concealed; and enjoyed at once the pleaſures of vengeance and the reputation of placability. He has never made one human being happy; and will perhaps ſee, in his melancholy and ridiculous old age, Fame herſelf, aſhamed of the miſtake ſhe has committed, revoke a ſuffrage, that was only beſtowed when rank, fortune and the ſlender ſemblances of wit were ſuppoſed to conſtitute a claim to immortality.

Saint John with the Golden Mouth.

† Literally, "*and beſtowed the worſhip upon ſtrange prieſts.*" The *apparent* force of the expreſſion we beg to be excuſed from explaining to the reader.

(B) *Behold*

(B) *Behold then the great ſecret revealed!* p. 45.

" HE may be conſidered as the firſt cauſe of the fermentation. It originated in the *Compte Rendu*. Calculaors were from the data there given enabled to eſtimate the finances of the nation. Till then, it was only underſtood in general that the revenues of the king were immenſe; their amount and the ſervices to which they were applied, were not known. But furniſhed with theſe advantages, every one undertook to diſcover the errors of government. The book upon the Adminiſtration of the Finances added new vigour to this firſt impulſe. It was an ex-miniſter diſcloſing the ſecrets of the ſtate; and it was thought that a way was opened of ſerving the public without having recourſe to extraordinary abilities. The diſputes which aroſe at the commencement of the Aſſembly of Notables, led to new diſcoveries. The multitude collected a more ample information, and enlarged their ſtock of materials. The anſwer extorted from Mr. de Calonne, opened the port-folios of adminiſtration. In fine, the meeting of the ſtates-general occaſioned a crowd of ephemeron publications; every one contributed his mite of information. Returned to office, Mr. Necker was deſirous of diſtinguiſhing his miniſterial exiſtence by a revolution.

" Was it neceſſary to give a conſtitution to a kingdom, that knew no ſuperior, and that conſidered the greateſt powers in Europe as its only rivals?

" Was it neceſſary, becauſe of a ſimple deficit, to ſubvert the exiſtence of a people, who, by their character, their induſtry and their zeal, have made ſo diſtinguiſhed a figure in the world?

" Was it neceſſary, that the kings of France ſhould, by ſo many ſacrifices, purchaſe the ſatisfaction of ſeeing their ſubjects pay the debts that they owed to one another?

" Was it within the range of probability, that thirty-two provinces, of which a third part had been conquered from other nations, ſhould unite upon the ſame principles and uniformly concur in the ſame objects, when it had been found that abſolute monarchy itſelf could not bind them in one chain of intereſt?

" The

" The author of ſo many changes has not drawn his theory from the ſources of profound ſtudy. He has never travelled; has read little; has thought little; his perſonal affairs have engroſſed his faculties. Order, diſintereſtedneſs and a ſtrict probity, is all that he has diſplayed. His reforms proved no ability; his loans were pernicious errors; the provinces never obtained relief from his adminiſtration; he left no other monuments of his virtues than a few monkiſh hoſpitals.

" The caiſſe d' eſcompte, the caiſſe d' amortiſſement, found in him an enemy to their beneficial inſtitutions.

" When he ſucceeded Mr. Turgot, œconomical reform was the chief inſtrument of his operations. When he ſucceeded the archbiſhop of Sens, he could find no reſource but in an univerſal wreck.

" By what claſs of citizens could a foreigner be attached to the fortune of France? By the ſovereign? There were on that ſide antipathies to be ſurmounted. By the nobility? He could not be blind to their diſaffection to him. By men of letters? He had ſuffered deeply from their animadverſions. The people of the provinces, therefore, were his only adherents; and how does their enthuſiaſm daily ſubſide, when they ſee neither the taxes diminiſhed, nor the annuities, paid, &c. &c.!

" Whence ſpring the ſecret fears of the partiſans of Mr. Necker, and the open alarms of his enemies reſpecting the event of his adminiſtration? From a want of that confidence, which reſults from a conviction of talents. His probity and his morals are too highly rated to permit them to call in queſtion his intentions, but the diſparity of the man to his office is too well known for any hopes to be entertained of an auſpicious regeneration.

" Ought what has hitherto been experienced to ſet us at eaſe? An aſſembly of Notables ſo circumſtanced, as neceſſarily to become divided—an affected delay for the letters of convocation——a regulation that has occaſioned the moſt imperfect, ſometimes the moſt vicious, elections—an operation of twenty-five millions, that has terrified the friends of their country——ten petty loans that have given diſquiet to men of reflection, &c. &c. Can ſuch conduct remind us of the Sullys, the real ſtateſmen?

Grant

"' Grant that his predeceſſors lent a too willing ear to multiplied, perhaps indiſcreet demands; but is it neceſſary to wear at all times an inflexible brow, and render authority odious? Is œconomy impracticable without ſeverity?"' *Review of the principal Publications upon the Subject of the States General.*

(C) *We have ſeen them developed and brought before the public by himſelf.* p. 47.]

AS the French have at laſt the happineſs of ſeeing the direction of affairs once more in the hands of Mr. Necker, it is to be ſuppoſed, that they will derive no little ſatisfaction from being enabled to perceive with a glance of the eye the real principles of this great miniſter. They conſtitute a part only of the moral ideas, ſo attractive, ſo animating, which abound in his writings, and which paint his character in ſuch pleaſing colours.

"The ſovereign of a kingdom, like that of France, "can, if he pleaſe, always maintain the balance be-"tween the ordinary revenues and the expenditure. "The diminution of the one, agreeable at all times to "the public wiſh, is in his power; and, when circum-"ſtances require it, the increaſe of taxes is a part of "his prerogative." *Compte Rendu*, p. 3, 4.

"It is the power of impoſing taxes which conſtitutes "the grandeur of the ſovereign." *Memoir preſented to the King, by Mr. Necker, in* 1778; *Compte Rendu*, p. 79.

"But, though the ſovereign, in a monarchical "government, be the centre of political intereſts; "though, in ſuch a conſtitution, he alone determine "the ſacrifices of the citizens; *he alone is the interpre-"ter of the wants of the ſtate*; *alone wills, alone "ordains*; alone has the power of compelling obedi-"ence, yet the principles of juſtice are not, on that "account, changed, and the duties of the repreſenta-"tive of the ſtate exiſt in their utmoſt force. From "theſe reflections ariſes a truth, greatly alarming to "the *conſciences* of kings: it is, that, while they "confide to the tribunals the deciſion of differences "between ſubject and ſubject, they remain ſole arbiters "of the greateſt queſtion that exiſts in the ſocial order,

" order, that of fixing the amount of the *claims and* " *pretenſions of the public treaſury upon the property* " *of each individual*; and that not only an upright " heart, but reflection and ſcience are neceſſary to " decide upon this queſtion, and underſtand it in all " its parts." *On the Adminiſtration of the Finances*, tome i. chap. 2. p. 44.

" The ſingle power *(in the provincial aſſemblies)* to " offer their obſervations in caſe of any new demands, " ſo that the will of the king may be always enlight- " ened, and never obſtructed. In fine, the name of " *free gift for ever interdicted*, and that of *pays d' ad-* " *miniſtration* ſubſtituted for that of *pays d' etat*, in " order that the ſimiliarity of names may never give " riſe to ſimiliar pretenſions. It is obvious to remark, " that the eſtabliſhment of theſe conditions will be pe- " culiarly eaſy, where the ſovereign is not reſtrained " by any anterior convention; and where of conſe- " quence every thing on his part becomes condeſcen- " ſion and beneficence. I will add as an eſſential con- " dition, that, whatever perfection we may imagine " we have given to this new inſtitution, it muſt be an- " nounced as only extending to a limited period: the " period to be renewed a ſecond and a third time, juſt " as your majeſty ſhall judge proper; ſo that, after " having exerted every effort to produce a beneficial " ſyſtem, your majeſty may ſtill have always in your " hands the means of aboliſhing it. With ſuch a pre- " caution what inconveniencies can we have to fear?" *Memoir preſented to the King in* 1778, p. 8.

" In a monarchical country, where *the will of the* " *prince ſolely conſtitutes the law*, the only anxiety of " the ſovereign ſhould be to aſcertain, that his juſt and " beneficent intentions are carried into execution." *Memoir preſented to the King in* 1778.

" There is however no part of his revenues, even " ſuch as are annual, which a king of France has not " the power of expending either well or ill." *Nouveaux Eclairciſſemens, ſur le Compte Rendu*, p. 63.

" The ancient connexions of France with the Swiſs " nation; the natural rampart, which their alliance " ſecures to a part of its frontiers; the long and loyal " ſervices of this patient and intrepid nation; in fine, " the *advantage perhaps that a ſovereign may derive in*

" *times*

" *times of trouble and effervescence from the possession* " *of a certain number of foreign troops*: these various " reasons induce us to consider the regular maintenance " of a corps from that country, as a *wise measure*." *On the Administration of the Finances*, tom II. chap. xii. p. 408.

" In the care we take of our reputation there is a " sentiment, independent of the judgment of others. " It is a mirror, in which we are accustomed to con- " template ourselves, and we wish it to be as pure as " our own heart." *Nouveaux Eclaircissemens, sur le Compte Rendu par M. Necker*, p. 181.

" The majority of nations, either from choice or " necessity, have intrusted their rights to the hands of " a single individual, and have thus erected a perpetu- "al monument of the spirit of discord, injustice and " disunion, which has so frequently reigned among " men. It is true, they have from time to time recol- " lected, that they were capable of themselves to as- " certain their true interests; but the monarch, appre- " hensive of their inconstancy, has been careful to " strengthen the supports of his power; and, by sur- " rounding himself with a warlike and disciplined army, " has disabled them from nourishing their dislike of " slavery; he has obtained soldiers by taxes, and taxes " by soldiers; and, by the assistance of these reciprocal " means, has made himself able to do every thing and " to resist all opposition." *On the Importance of Religious Opinions*, beginning of Chap. vii. p. 206.

(D) *Could not have been the result of mere awkwardness.* p. 47.)

THE director-general was sure to displease a part of the nation. There was scarcely more than one way left for him: that of simply laying before the states-general the situation of the Finances.

An enlightened people, who, upon questions of œconomy, hold already the second place in Europe, and will soon dispute the first, ought not patiently to submit to be tutored by a foreigner, whose office did not allow him to incroach upon the functions of the chancellor.

It was desirable, that a minister of finance should have avoided pronouncing his own eulogium, or, at least,

leaſt, that he ſhould not have embraced every opportunity of introducing it into the important queſtions he was ambitious to diſcuſs.

The original *Compte Rendu*, often diſcuſſed and never ſufficiently vindicated; the vigorous attacks of Mr. de Calonne weakly repelled, never defeated; an unintelligible book upon religion, and another ſtill more erroneous upon the finances, had produced no favourable impreſſion upon the ſmall number of auditors who were not to be dazzled by an exaggerated reputation.

The complicated circumlocutions of the *Report* and of the various *Letters* to explain, the affectation of recommending at Lyons and Bourdeaux the bankers to be elected as deputies; backwardneſs to explain, for fear of pledging himſelf, and not being afterwards able to accommodate to circumſtances; all had their effect upon the minds of the aſſembly.

If however that indulgence had been ſhown him, which was becoming towards a foreigner; if the diſcourſe had been leſs prolix and the principles more determinate, many good things might have been derived from it, and more paſſages than one might have been found of real utility.

The compliment to the nation in the firſt page, is worthy the French academy. "At length then, after "ſo long an interval, behold the deputies of a nation, "poſſeſſing ſo many claims to diſtinction, called upon "once more to the aſſiſtance of the throne, &c. &c."

But what ſoftened every heart, already awakened to ſenſibility by the compliment that was paid them, was the following modeſt and ſentimental paſſage:

"You will ſurely, gentlemen, excuſe me from "looking back to the (*unfortunate*) period, which has "preceded (*my brilliant adminiſtration*). It is reſ-"pecting the preſent ſituation, it is reſpecting the evil "to be remedied, that I am to inſtruct you and to en-"gage your attention. You will excuſe me alſo from "mentioning all the difficulties, which (*by my genius*) "were to be ſurmounted, in order to ſupport the tot-"tering edifice of the finances from the end of Au-"guſt to the preſent moment.——There are labours; "there are *ſufferings*, whoſe only compenſation and "true reward is an internal ſatisfaction."

(The

(The good will of the king, the approbation of the people, a nation's gratitude, would be but a poor recompence for ſuch cruel *ſufferings*)

From admiration the aſſembly roſe to joy, when they were told that the deficit amounted only to fifty-ſix millions *; and this generous acknowledgment made the deeper impreſſion, becauſe it contradicted on one ſide the paſt aſſertions of the director-general, and on the other indirectly juſtified thoſe of his predeceſſors. The joy was extreme, when we heard the conſoling enumeration of ſixteen ways of ſupplying it; ſo that if, unfortunately and unexpectedly, the ſtates-general ſhould not feel the neceſſity of coming to the relief of the ſtate, the buſineſs might quietly remain without their aſſiſtance, till the oppoſition ceaſed; and thus would they be made in a high degree uſeful, without being made indiſpenſably neceſſary.

But the fineſt ſtroke beyond all compariſon in this extraordinary ſpeech, is, where the orator treats of the force of the royal engagements. We might have expected one of thoſe moments of effuſion, when the ſoul is hurried away by the generoſity of its ſentiments: but, no; the ſtateſman is every where viſible; and, after having in the ſtrongeſt manner ſtated the pledge of the ſovereign as ſacred, he aſks himſelf this queſtion: "is there no diſtinction to be made between the "various claims of creditors; and may not the in-"tereſt of ſuch loans, as were too favourable to the "lenders undergo a ſubſequent *reduction?*" We ſee in this objection the man of courage, who is not aſhamed to confeſs his paſt errors; the miniſter, who never loſes for a moment the habitude of reflection: but, as a propoſition of this nature excites alarm, and appears to contradict in ſome degree what he had before advanced, he calms this precipitate murmur by exclaiming: "You will perceive, gentlemen, that the utility "of this meaſure would bear no proportion to the in-"conveniencies that might reſult from *maiming the* "*univerſal principles of national honour*, and the eſ-"ſential baſis of public confidence." What is this boaſted utility? The multitude perceive it not; it has eſcaped the attention of more readers than one. It is this

* £ 2,330,000 ſterling.

—"As

—" As every thing that is ſubject to arbitrary deciſion, " is neceſſarily incompatible with a character altoge- " ther inviolate, the lenders in future will be obliged " to take into their eſtimate the riſk of ſuch an inqui- " ſition." Of courſe, conſigned over to the horrors of uncertainty, they would grow diſguſted with theſe hazardous ſpeculations, and endeavour to employ their capitals in the uſeful purſuits of commerce and agriculture.

The conſummate addreſs of the director-general, in omitting the gloomy picture of the national debt, and of the mode of conſolidating it, cannot have eſcaped obſervation: theſe petty conſiderations could have no place in a diſcourſe, the object of which was totally different. In vain did the bailliages* expreſs their opinion of the neceſſity of ſecuring, by immutable arrangements, the future proſperity of the finances; the director-general eloquently obſerve: " In fine, meſ- " ſieurs, it is proper to mention to you, that you are " not indebted to any abſolute neceſſity of pecuniary " ſuccour, for the precious advantage of having met in " this auguſt aſſembly. On the contrary, the majority " of the reſources I have deſcribed to you, have al- " ways been in the power of the ſovereign.——If the " embarraſſment of the finances had ſprung only from " the difficulty that might attend the introducing a new " tax, no perſon would have laid conſiderable ſtreſs on " ſuch an embarraſſment.——A king, who had been " jealous only for the preſervation of his authority, " would have found, in the retrenchments that are al- " ways in his power, the means of ſurmounting diffi- " culties, and of making the impoſition of a new tax " unneceſſary."

This leſſon was undoubtedly eſſentially neceſſary for the information of a raſh aſſembly, who would otherwiſe have imagined, that they actually poſſeſſed legiſlative authority; that they were empowered to produce a national regeneration; that they could annex conditions to the melioration of the public revenues, and fix a price upon the conſolidation of the national debt; whereas now, advertiſed before hand of the power

* Bailliage is the name of the diſtricts into which France is divided, each of them ſeperately poſſeſſing a right of ſending their repreſentatives to the ſtates-general.

that

that exiſts of annihilating them at once, they would be altogether inexcuſable in attributing to themſelves weight and conſequence. Mankind are always inclined to rate themſelves too highly, and ſtand in need of corrections, which, without diſcouraging them, may repreſs the ſoarings of inordinate ambition. Happy the nation, that is bleſt with a ſort of dictator, always at hand to reſtore its wanderings, and to trace out the path of felicity!

In the following page, the orator brings forward the healing balm, which may cure the wound that the eloquence of truth had juſt inflicted; and he declares, that the king conſents, *as it were*, to place the diſpoſal of the finances under the guardianſhip of the nation. There are people indeed, who might pretend that theſe two paſſages are in direct contradiction to each other; but it ought to be recollected, that the art of rhetoric delights in a figure of this kind. To diſplay the value of a ſacrifice of this ſort, nothing can be more natural than to ſhow, that it was altogether ſpontaneous. Demoſthenes and Cicero have left us ſeveral examples of the utility of this mode of ſpeaking properly applied.

Thoroughly acquainted with the great maxims of his art, the director-general has frequently recourſe to this figure. In pages 72 and 73, he obſerves, that *the occupations of the aſſembly will be perfectly unlimited, that they are the aſſociates of majeſty, and that the king will direct the ideas, which may be entitled to their diſcuſſion, to be ſubmitted to them.* You imagine them without doubt, arrived to the ſummit of glory! on the contrary, behold them all on a ſudden degraded from the ſteps of the throne to the forms of a ſchool-boy! The reforms to be adopted are ſuggeſted to them, a taſk is preſcribed them, and they are limited to a given number of ideas. The hope of France no longer appears, but in the character of a multitude of timid obſervers, who wait to receive the leſſons of wiſdom, and quietly ſubmit themſelves to the guidance of a miniſter.

And what is the deſign of the obſervations we have quoted? Plainly this. A perfect harmony between the three orders of the ſtate, would conduce to the welfare of the nation, and the intereſt of the ſovereign: but it would run counter to the private views of the miniſ-

ter.

ter. If the aſſembled nation ſaid to their prince: "Behold, ſire, the object of the people of France; "they will ſupport your authority at home and your "character abroad; they are ready to aſſiſt you with "their purſe and their blood. Deign to commit to "their judgment the deciſion of what is your true in-"tereſt." To what purpoſe would the fine ſpeech of the director-general in that caſe have ſerved? It would have appeared inſupportably out of place and ridiculous; we ſhould have known to have done without the orator, as we did without the firſt miniſter *. This is the ſituation that it was wiſhed to prevent.

The object of the people of France is not to deliver themſelves from monarchical authority, but from miniſterial tyranny; and, to ſupport itſelf, this tyranny boaſts of its ſervices, exaggerates its reſources, and ſeeks at all events to be independent of the will of thoſe, by whom the revenues are raiſed.

The director-general of the finances, loaded with glory and the gifts of fortune, a total ſtranger to every ſort of intrigue, ſuperior even to the influence of ambition, afraid of the court and of ſtate affairs, oppreſſed with the burden of office, having no deſire but for ſolitude, kind, humane, benevolent, and the advocate of liberty even to fanaticiſm, has but a ſingle paſſion, the happineſs of the people of France; of that people, whom he ſpoiled by the immoderate praiſes beſtowed upon them in his Treatiſe upon the Finances. It is not to be doubted that ſuch a miniſter is of more true value than the ſtates-general. But can we flatter ourſelves with a continued ſucceſſion of ſuch ſtateſmen? Alas, heaven ſhows itſelf but too parſimonious of men like him! The nation therefore is not to be blamed, ſupremely happy as ſhe is at preſent, if ſhe recollect, that ſhe will not always have a ſuperior genius in the firſt office of adminiſtration, and if ſhe ſeek a reſource in herſelf, to conſole her for the loſs of an illuſtrious ſtranger, who will now ſecure to her the bleſſings of a free government, juſt as in 1781 he left a ſurplus of the revenue over the expenditure.

Coſt what it may, the miniſter deſires to govern us; his zeal is certainly entitled to every return of gratitude. Coſt what it may, the nation is deſirous to ſpare him

* Archbiſhop of Sens.

the trouble. We ſhall ſee who will come off victor from this generous conteſt.

(E) *Every thing is probable; nothing can be demonſtrated.* p. 48.]

IT is long ſince we have heard, that a great work was preparing to be ſubmited to the ſtates-general. The promiſed performance is probably the ſpeech of the miniſter, delivered May ſixth, and ſince publiſhed. The verboſe and intrepid author certainly placed no ordinary dependence upon the force of his eloquence or the enthuſiaſm of his auditors. Some of them have ſmiled at the democratical principles, that are every where ſcattered through it with apparent affectation; others have rejected with indignation a doctrine, that led to the moſt pernicious effects. Ths ſelect number of true Frenchmen, who have not ſacrificed their underſtandings at the ſhrine of a few fanatical apoſtles of a new conſtitution, weep over the public diſaſters, that have thrown a great nation almoſt defenceleſs into the diſpoſal of a ſtranger, affectedly the friend of order, but really of ſedition; that have expoſed an ancient monarchy to be battered down by the unhallowed hands of a republican, who is recommended it ſeems by a few moral qualifications *.

For ourſelves, who have voluntarily declined mixing in theſe tumultuous aſſemblies, in which we might perhaps have appeared with a certain degree of credit, who, faithful to the voice of reaſon, have for thirty years ſtudied to ſpeak the language of ſo reſpectable a miſtreſs, and who exert ourſelves for the preſervation of her rights, we conceive, that we are not altogether uſeleſs to our country, while we watch the proceedings of thoſe who ſerve her, and awaken the buſy and the

* It is not ſtated whether this note be written by the author of the work, or be an extract from ſome other publication. But the ſentiments of the preceding paragraph are ſo diametrically oppoſite to thoſe which the author inculcates in many other paſſages, that we think ourſelves bound to put the reader upon his guard againſt too haſtily ſuppoſing them the production of the ſame pen.

unreflecting

unreflecting to ſuſpect certain delegates of public authority.

We impeach in the court of poſterity the author of this diſcourſe, which is on ſo many accounts reprehenſible; and we call upon the national aſſembly to join with us, in the ſolemn demand we addreſs to the executive power, that the principles of this compoſition, which have been pretended to be the baſis of the national proceedings, be ſifted to the bottom.

When a man cannot want to be informed, that the ſound part of an enlightened people looks with abhorrence upon the principles, upon which it is intended to form a certain ſyſtem of government, what name ſhall we beſtow upon his impudent reſiſtance to the deſires of the people?

When a man, an hundred times convicted of errors proceeding from ignorance, of errors proceeding from pride, of errors proceeding from irreſolution, miſtakes a ſimple advertiſement * for a ſerious perſecution, and glories in the repetition of falſhoods that have been often refuted, how can that man lay claim to the ſmalleſt indulgence?

When a man, whoſe buſineſs it is to ſtate a pecuniary account, wanders into the province of a legiſlator, and preſents a code inſtead of a table of receipts and diſburſements, is it not evident that he aſpires to ſomething more than the mere office of miniſter?

When a man has written a book to prove, that the deficit amounts to one hundred and thirty millions †, and a memoir in which he reduces it to fifty-ſix ‡, is it not clear, that in one of theſe inſtances he has advanced an unfounded aſſertion? Who then will prove to the ſtates-general, that the man, who deceived himſelf two years ago, does not deceive himſelf now?

When the object of a man's compoſition is to hide his real opinion, at the ſame time that he appears to diſcloſe it, is it not probable, that he has no confidence in his own plans; and that he is ſecuring an aſylum for his vanity in caſe of a miſcarriage?

* The author appears to allude to the notice taken of the Compte Rendu, in Mr. de Calonne's ſpeech to the notables of 1787. † £.5,416,000. ‡ £.2,330,000.

By

By what fatal incantation does this man ſtill faſcinate us? Raiſed to power in conſequence of one of thoſe cabals, of which courts themſelves are often the earlieſt victims, we forget, that he is ſtained in the eyes of the nation with the political crime, of having diſplaced the moſt virtuous of her miniſters*, the miniſter, to whoſe principles ſhe has now recourſe, and whoſe plans the director-general has no other merit than that of ſervilely copying.

Enriched with his ſpoils, he diſpoſes of them as he pleaſes; he ſuppreſſes, he rejects, he disjoints, and he alters. He is attacked on all ſides, embarraſſed, driven to his laſt reſource, his pride forbids him to vindicate himſelf, and that very pride delivers us from his adminiſtration. He withdraws to his temporary retreat, at once to avenge himſelf, and to reveal to Europe in a voluminous performance our misfortunes, our errors and our vulnerable places.

He hurries to Paris to foment, to cheriſh, to inflame the intrigues, which his book had occaſioned; to revive a party that was almoſt expiring, and to commence a clandeſtine war againſt whoever ſhould fill the office of miniſter. The largeneſs of his fortune was but too favourable to this thirſt of intrigue; he aſſiſted its operation by that auſterity of manners, the well known and principal engine of ambition; and he gained to himſelf a party in that prouder claſs of mankind, whoſe incurable diſeaſe is the deſire to protect, and who are ever attaching themſelves to talents unaſſiſted by birth, or birth unornamented by talents.

By his books, his emiſſaries, and a few oſtentatious liberalities, he ſecured the favour of the people. The provinces in particular proſtrate themſelves before the uſeleſs idol. A man of genius, but unguarded and imprudent †, makes a blot in his favour. Immediately he adopts a proceeding, which may procure him the honours of exile, and attaches to his party the ſworn enemies of the exiſting government.

Fortune places at the helm of affairs the moſt incapable of all miniſters ‡. Every fault he commits is

* Mr. Turgot, 1776.
† Mr. de Calonne.
‡ Mr. de Brienne.

the

the ſource of a new regret, and a pretence for recalling the ſtateſman and the man, to conſult upon the deſperate caſe of the republic. Thoſe, who were juſtly inimical to two turbulent ſatraps, unite themſelves with his implicit partiſans. A religious book had come in the interval to ſwell the fanaticiſm, the diſorder became preſſing; the criſis was terrible; the provinces grew weary with perpetual change; they addreſſed themſelves to the heart of the king. Endued with peculiar ſenſibility, he diſobeys the conviction of his own mind, that he may ſatisfy his miſguided ſubjects; and, blotting from his memory what kings rarely forget, he permits a fortunate ſtranger to ſeat himſelf at his foot-ſtool.

That tranquility, that was now to return among the provinces, fails to return; the intereſt of the national debt, which was now to be paid, is not paid; credit, which was now to revive, does not revive; that confidence, which was now to unite every deſcription of ſubjects, is no where to be found.

On the contrary, an aſſembly preparatory to the ſtates-general ſinks into the moſt ſhameful ineſficiency, and it becomes neceſſary to diſſolve it, that one part of it may not ſecede from another. The nation is alarmed by the undue favour granted to a bank*, of which the miniſter had propheſied the fall, after having retarded the inſtitution. A myſterious and crafty regulation is made public, which is interpreted and reinterpreted, without ever diſcovering its meaning. The troubles, which have diffuſed themſelevs among the provinces; the natural cauſes of theſe ſeditions, which for a century paſt have been periodical, and to which future ages will be equally expoſed, till an adminiſtration, ſo often warned by experience, ſhall oppoſe abundant magazines to the ſeverity of the ſeaſons; were unforeſeen and unprovided for.

What ſtrange and obſtinate blindneſs has ſeized upon the nation? Whence comes this incredible patience of liſtening for three hours to a preceptor that dogmatizes, inſtead of a ſteward that delivers in his account? An obſcure and unknown plebeian lords it over the nobility of France; a proteſtant inſtructs her

* The caiſſe d' eſcompte.

clergy in the principles of religion; a banker dictates conſtitutional maxims to the firſt nation in Europe.

Hiſtory undoubtedly furniſhes various examples of ambitious miniſters, who have directed in ſecret the reins of a government, which the hand of the monarch has appeared to graſp; but it was reſerved for our days to ſee an individual diſplay this arrogant ambition, and diſtribute their taſk to twelve hundred repreſentatives, tell them what to think, circumſcribe them within certain bounds, and render them, not the artiſans of their future proſperity, but the approvers of a plan already digeſted.

It is then become neceſſary to ſhow, that this ſpeech, abounding in miſtaken principles, is not only dangerous in policy, but ill timed and irreverent to the nation, the monarch and every order in the ſtate; and, as it has been pompouſly announced and delivered as the baſis of the operations to be adopted, it is but juſt to anatomiſe it, and to ſhow the character of its author in its genuine colours.

And let no man tell me, that the idol of the people is to be treated with forbearance. That is an argument, that had never much weight with minds of native force; at the moment that the nation is aſſembled, it is abſolutely nugatory. The nation owes no reſpect, but to the law; no kindneſs, but to him that ſupports it; no eſteem, but to virtue; no confidence, but to patriotiſm. Intrigue offends us, pretenſion wearies, pride repels, and chicanery alarms us; in the ſame manner as ſincerity and frankneſs conſtitute the infallible road to our approbation and applauſe.

(F) *What could we anſwer to ſuch an apoſtrophe?* p. 48.]

IT appears every day, that the reputation of Mr. Necker is greater than his merit. It was ſuppoſed, that he had a ſyſtem of conduct ingeniouſly concealed; and the friends of their country were grateful to him for his management in accommodating himſelf to different parties. It was believed, that, when the ſeaſon came, he would declare his ſentiments frankly and explicitly. That moment is arrived, it is preſent, and he ſtill adheres to his ambiguity of deciſion. Some

have

have imputed it to want of courage; others to view ſecretly favourable to the ariſtocracy; a third ſort to hi predominant love of office. The truth is, that he ha no more the plan of a conſtitution in his head, than you will be able to find it in this laſt diſcourſe. He has arranged a few ideas upon the ſubject of finance; he has uſed order and method in the public receipts and expenditure; and the miniſter is nothing more than a good book keeper, an exact paymaſter, a faithful receiver and an honeſt caſhier. So true it is, that the occupations of an early life, the firſt talents we are enabled to diſplay, reproduce themſelves in many different forms, and, decorated in the charms of ſelf-love and vanity, appear all-ſufficient, prompt us to undertake every enterpriſe, to accept every ſpecies of truſt. The integrity of Mr. Necker, his eloquence laborious but genuine, his character patient but pliable, his ſucceſs, his wealth, his credit, his admirers, his very enemies, have all contributed to deceive him. Miſtaken in the eſtimate of his own ability, how could he avoid miſleading others? It is to circumſtances alone we owe the exiſtence of his crime and of our miſtake. We wanted an honeſt man: an honeſt man preſents himſelf, and we make of him a divinity. I have myſelf no perſonal knowledge of the miniſter: but I will venture to predict, that the only means of giving permanency to the deception, into which he has rather been drawn, than has deſignedly cauſed; the only means to ſtop the flight of public opinion, which is now on the wing, and which, enraged with its firſt miſtake, will make the miniſter as univerſally odious as he has been popular; the only meaſure which he can now adopt, is, to perſuade the ſovereign of the neceſſity of uniting himſelf with the commons, for the purpoſe of eſcaping from national bankruptcy, from civil war, and from all the calamities that impend over the empire: Does the king refuſe? Mr. Necker has nothing to do but reſign, if he would ſecure to himſelf the merited regrets of the whole nation.——We will mention a few only of the many advantages that will reſult from ſuch a conduct. The anxiety, the chagrin, the ſhackles, that he formerly encountered; the obſtacles once oppoſed to him and once ſurmounted, his induſtry, his patience, his firmneſs, will otherwiſe be

for ever loſt to his character and his fame. But let us conſider him as proceeding in the way we recommend, and we ſhall ſee him by one action ſecuring to himſelf eternal honour. The work of the conſtitution is above the ſtrength and out of the department of the miniſter: it will be performed in the ſtates general, and the nation meanwhile will refer all their gratitude to Louis the Sixteenth and Mr Necker. The talents he poſſeſſes are ſufficient for his place; they will continue to be exaggerated, and he need not fear the future detection of their poverty. His very faults will be applauded, as ſo many means employed by him to arrive the more ſurely at the object in view. In a word, Mr. Necker perhaps holds in his diſpoſal the deſtiny of France, but aſſuredly he is at this moment maſter of his own. One bold and courageous word ſecures it; but it muſt be ſaid quickly, and this page will not be read by the public, before he has either ſeized upon or loſt the happieſt occaſion, that ever preſented itſelf to a mortal, eager after glory and renown.——

This note is extracted from a work upon the adminiſtration of Mr. Necker, which will ſpeedily be publiſhed.

(G) *It is complete in all its parts.* p. 77.]

THIS reflection is not to be applied to certain ſmaller productions, the contents of which are only elegant tranſlation, or liberal imitation. It is of no ſmall importance to introduce into France truths already familiar in happier climates, becauſe thoſe climates are poſſeſſed of the bleſſings of liberty.

(K) *But a pamphlet has appeared.* p. 82.]

ONE of thoſe extraordinary men, that all the world talks about, that few underſtand, and fewer ſtill are capacitated to judge of with impartiality. He is conſidered as a writer, eager after [illegible]; riſking extraordinary opinions for the ſake of exciting public curioſity, which can no longer be engaged but by bold aſſertions and paradoxes. He is regarded as a rigid economiſt, repreſenting to himſelf abuſe on every ſide, and ſeeking to introduce an imaginary perfection, which writers

writers may admire in their cloſet, but which is altogether incompatible with human weakneſs. Men figure him to themſelves as a ſpirit, bold even to temerity, tormented with deſires after liberty, toleration and public happineſs; eager to ſurmount the counteraction of circumſtances, and to abridge the ſlow progreſs of time, that is accuſtomed to gain over the minds of men only by dint of perſeverance and patience. Perhaps I have myſelf adopted a part of theſe ideas reſpecting him. Some objections however have occurred to me. Few writers, ſaid I to myſelf, have been ſo well informed reſpecting the ſubjects they treat. Many people cenſure, but nobody anſwers him; unleſs indeed we ſhould dignify with the title of anſwer paſquinades and abuſe.

This objection has led me to examine the man more cloſely; and the following is the reſult of my conjectures. I ſuſpect him of meditating a revolution in politics, as Voltaire produced a revolution in opinion, and Rouſſeau in the conduct of domeſtic life. Convinced that almoſt every thing in government ſtands in need of reform, he has perceived in himſelf the talent to detect abuſes, the courage to proclaim them, the genius to remedy them. Anxious for no other deference than that which reſults from acknowledged capacity, for no other fortune than that which his parents could not withhold from him, for no other indulgence than the liberty to think and to ſpeak, he aſſumes to be the organ of truth; to ſupply what miniſters cannot do, who, even for the ſake of the people, are obliged to qualify and preſent imperfectly the ſources of happineſs; what the courtier cannot do, becauſe his trade is inſinuation, becauſe his buſineſs is gratitude, becauſe his ſervice only is paid for and his opinion is gratuitous; what the philoſopher cannot do, becauſe he compounds with the cenſure of the world, and acquires the right of publiſhing uſeful hints by the ſuppreſſion of tranſcendent truths.

For the proper diſcharge of ſuch an office what is it that is neceſſary? a comprehenſion, profound, extenſive, capable of perceiving at once the concealed purpoſe of him that propoſes a meaſure, the true motive of him that adopts it, and the intereſt that the people have in its execution: a manly and energetic eloquence,

quence, which boldly unmaſks voluntary error, which enlightens without irritating the ſovereign, who is rendered for a moment the accomplice of that error, and which inſpires courage into the people, ſpectators of the efforts that are made for their liberty and their welfare: an experienced pen, which ſtates connectedly and with perſpicuity the principles upon which the legiſlator ought to proceed, and ſecures his aſſent, by demonſtrating to him, that theſe principles are the genuine ſources of public felicity. The three advantages I have enumerated will hardly be denied to the man under conſideration.

I will confeſs, that the warmth of his temper ſometimes hurries him beyond the eſtabliſhed rules of politeneſs. But ſhall trivial errors make us forget the true nature of the queſtion; and, becauſe he is not perfect, ſhall we infer, that he may not be extremely uſeful, that he has not in him the true ſeeds of a miniſter, that he does not familiariſe both ſovereigns and ſubjects with the language of independency, that he does not render to the world one of thoſe ſervices that ſhe receives once in an age? Can we be ignorant, that his treatiſe upon *Lettres de Cachet* excited that fermentation which has at length for ever deprived a deſpotical adminiſtration of this odious engine.——Can we be ignorant, that his Doubts concerning the Schelde gave a vehement ſhock to the deſpotic diſpoſition, that deſired to engroſs to itſelf the property of which this river is the depoſit, and gave conviction to the perſons who oppoſed that diſpoſition? Can we be ignorant, that his efforts againſt ſtock-jobbing prevented the eſcape of immenſe ſums, that were ready to deſert the kingdom, and ſtopped a multitude of credulous citizens, who were hurrying themſelves down the precipice? But what muſt we think of his unconquerable love of paradox! Let us reflect in the firſt place, that this is the appellation we beſtow upon whatever runs counter to received opinions, that received opinions are commonly the fruit of prejudice and error, and that we cannot be put upon our guard againſt them, without the commiſſion of ſome degree of violence upon ordinary habit and cuſtom.

Nothing is more rare, than a man of true force and elevation; nothing is more rare, than the union of

theſe

theſe qualities with induſtry and application; nothing is more rare, than to join to a comprehenſive intellect and profound ſcience an unalterable courage, a complete ſuperiority to the allurements of the world; nothing is more rare, than to add to theſe extraordinary requiſites an ardent and impetuous eloquence, that ſubjugates the opinions of mankind; in fine, nothing is more rare, than to poſſeſs in conjunction with this that independence of the world, which can exiſt but juſt ſo far as fortune has provided before your birth for your phyſical exiſtence. Behold then a being elevated above the reſt of mankind! What uſe has he hitherto made of his talents? He has devoted them to the ſervice of kings, who are their own miniſters; of miniſters in thoſe countries, where kings are like gods, always overſhadowed with their immortal glory; of induſtrious citizens, from whom activity and craft had nearly ſtolen away the fruit of their labours.

News writers and gazetteers may ſuppoſe that his pen is the ſlave of circumſtances, and alternately engaged on one ſide and on the other; they are perfectly at liberty, if ſuch tales can be of ſervice to their publications. But there is an order of men, that believe in facts and not in miſrepreſentations, whoſe confidence is regulated by the uſe men make of their talents, who by means of the work are enabled to read in the ſoul of its author, to aſcertain his intentions and become acquainted with his principles.

We everlaſtingly talk of the beauty of ſtyle, of the felicity of ideas, and never of that intellectual courage, which is a ſpecies of heroiſm of more worth than that of Alexander and Bayard. With what ſpirit for example can we praiſe a d'Alembert, the ſervile flatterer of kings in public, their ſworn enemy in the intimacy of private converſation; ever ſtudious of his peace, of his glory, of the means of eſcaping from criticiſm and cenſure, and never affording a thought to the rights of truth and the demands of the people; of misfortune the timid and cowardly friend, but opening both his arms to receive him who is elevated upon the ſhoulders of patronage?

There is need of courage, and no ordinary ſhare of courage, to be the firſt to launch a truth upon the ocean of mind; or even to riſk an opinion, from the diſquiſition

ſition of which benefit may reſult. Every new principle at its firſt appearance is either ſuffered to paſs without notice, or received with ſhouts of ridicule and contempt. He who advances it, is ſure to be the butt of a thouſand ſarcaſms, unleſs indeed his reputation procures him reſpect, and then it is ſtated as an error, which has inſinuated itſelf into the writings of a man of genius. On the other hand, if a celebrated name do not furniſh a paſſport to the aſſertion, it becomes the object of univerſal attack; its author is the firſt victim to the popular fury, and it is not till long after, that he recovers the ground he has loſt.

Above all, nothing is ſo eaſy and commodious as to be the ſworn panegyriſt of whatever a monarch thinks proper to do; the indulgent advocate of manners and laws as they are, and the eloquent defender of eſtabliſhed power. Every body has a tranſient pity for an unfortunate man who is unjuſtly condemned to die; but it is rare to find a courageous magiſtrate, who adventures to untie from the wheel three miſerable wretches ready to expire under the hand of the executioner. Governments have a cold forbearance for thoſe, who pretend that the depoſitaries of power are not infallible; but they heap with unbounded liberality their diſtinctions and favours upon the crafty knave, who acknowledges their perfection. They permit the ſale of a book that juſtly cenſures their errors, and they do not ſtretch out the hand of power but againſt him who reveals firſt and leading truths; but they proſtitute titles, places and penſions upon the mercenary writer, who ſacrifices his liberty upon the altar of the throne, who pleads the cauſe of injuſtice and defends the infraction of treaties.

I repeat again in favour of the antagoniſts of the count de Mirabeau, that I believe his youth was not exempt from imprudence; that I am ſatisfied that his mind, rather ſuſceptible than iraſcible, has ſometimes exceeded the juſt principle of perſonal defence; that reflection has repeatedly taught him to diſavow certain paſſages in his writings. But I think, that the greatneſs of his talents ſtamps a value on thoſe writings; that he writes with ſincerity and conviction; that his principles form a whole; that his ſyſtem upon toleration and liberty preſents us with ſimple reſources and an

an obvious practicability. I think, that we are intereſted in the proſperity of talents, that are conſecrated in ſome ſort to the illumination of mankind, and able to lay the foundation of the great work of political liberty.

GARBES. p. 105.]

Mr. Bergaſſe, animated with a double anxiety for utility and for reputation; uniting with a confidence in his own ſtrength that ardent activity to which difficulty is as nothing; and to that time known only by his precipitate converſion to a pretended diſcovery; thought himſelf called to fill the ſplendid character, which Elijah de Beaumont, Loyſeau and others had played with ſo much applauſe. The cauſe of his client, little intereſting in itſelf, appeared to him capable of being made ſo by the character of the perſons concerned. He undertook it with more eagerneſs than deliberation, and opened it, without ſubmitting himſelf to the cuſtomary forms, from which we hardly ever depart with impunity. The rectitude of his intention led him to deſpiſe danger, and his ardour gave him no time to obſerve, that he was himſelf betraying his ſecret motive in his two firſt memorials, in which he introduced two fragments, one upon adultery and another upon politics, and evinced an intention of fixing upon the orator the regards of the public. His end was anſwered; his perſonal ſucceſs made him loſe ſight of the true means of defending his client; he gave every thing to eloquence and nothing to argument; epiſode ſucceeded epiſode, and the principal object was forgotten, for the ſake of the intrigue with mademoiſelle de Beaumarchais and the ſtratagem of madame Fournel. For the cunning Beaumarchais, he indeed hazarded a few ill conceived jeſts, but he did not give up the letters, the fundamental materials of the ſuit, and, as the judges were bound to pronounce upon facts and not upon phraſes, the orator was neceſſarily defeated. When reaſon and eloquence unite their forces, their ſucceſs is ſure; but, if they divide, the firſt argues without intereſting us, and the laſt intereſts without convincing us. Mr.

Bergaſſe is a man of talents; but he is totally unqualified for the affairs of the bar and the affairs of the ſtate. What he ſays, he ſays perfectly well; but what he ſays is nothing to the purpoſe. In the buſineſs of human life his caſe is like that of certain writers, who are ſo unlucky as never to think of the proper word. In the age of polite writing, Mr. Bergaſſe would have been a celebrated man; but he came into the world five and twenty years too late.

Letter to Mad. de —— upon the Decree of 2 April in the affair of Mr. de Kornman.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.